



Pedagogická  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita  
v Českých Budějovicích  
University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích  
Pedagogická fakulta  
Katedra anglistiky

Bakalářská práce

Lexical exclusivity in the communication of League  
of Legends players

Lexikální exkluzivita v komunikaci hráčů League of  
Legends

Vypracoval: Adam Kohout  
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jaroslav Emmer Ph.D.  
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## PODĚKOVÁNÍ

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## ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá jazykem používaným v online hře League of Legends. Teoretická část práce se zaměřuje zejména na slang a jeho poddruhy, slovotvorné procesy a in-groups. Kapitola o slovotvorných procesech klade největší důraz na abreviaci a akronymy. Dále pak práce popisuje princip hry a jakým stylem probíhá komunikace. V praktické části jsem provedl analýzu lexikálních jednotek z in-game chatu, které program #LancsBox vyhodnotil jako nejpoužívanější. Cílem výzkumu je sestavení žebříčku nejpoužívanějších slov a následné rozdělení do kategorií podle exkluzivity a slovotvorných procesů. Výsledkem práce je zjištění, že jazyk používaný v League of Legends je exkluzivní jen z části.

## ABSTRACT

This work explores the language used in the online game League of Legends. The theoretical part is focused on slang and its subcategories, such as internet slang or non-standard spelling. Followed by a chapter exploring slang and word-forming processes, which are crucial for this research, such as abbreviations and acronyms. Theoretical part ends with a chapter discussing in-groups and out-groups, followed by a brief description of the game itself and how players communicate. The practical part consists of an analysis of the most used terms from the in-game chat, which the #LancsBox program evaluated. The scope of this work is to assemble a list of most popular terms, which are divided in categories based on their exclusivity and word-forming process. The result of this research shows that language used within League of Legends is only partially exclusive.



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## **1 Introduction**

In the era of digital platforms and internet, the way we communicate with each other has been transformed completely. With most of the communication taking place on the internet, probably due to its comfort and accessibility, it has become a unique linguistic domain. Such language can be found anywhere on the internet, whether its social media such as Facebook and Twitter, or discussion forums like Reddit. This language has a unique trait, which is time saving, meaning that the usual form of the language is consisting of various kinds of shortening and abbreviations.

This time saving attribute is very important in communication of players of online games, because of its fast-paced gameplay where players need to share information as fast as possible. The language in online games is very efficient and it can be incomprehensible for inexperienced people. It's the fast-paced gameplay that is causing language to be shortened, even if the player wanted to properly express himself, he is not able to. If a new player was to start playing a game, it would be extremely difficult for him to understand others, as he is overwhelmed with learning the game and when he tries to chat with others, he doesn't understand them. In this thesis, I would like to shed the light on what makes online gaming language unique from common internet language. The game I chose for this research is League of Legends (LoL). The main reason I chose is its enormous player base, which can be considered as the largest amongst online games. In addition to that, is a personal favourite of mine, and as I have been in the scene for eleven years, such experience makes me well-equipped to grasp its terms and conduct this research. The result of this work will be a list of most frequently used terms in LoL chats, which will be divided by their exclusivity, word forming processes, and the terms will be analysed.

To do such analysis, I shall explain the word forming processes and slang overall in the theoretical part of this thesis. Word forming processes such as abbreviations and acronyms or clipping will play a crucial role when it comes to understanding the results of the research part, because they are the most common.

## 2 Theoretical part

### 2.1 Semantics

From a linguistic point of view, semantics can be interpreted as a subcategory that studies meaning of words. The focus of semantics can be on words, phrases, sentences, or even larger units in discourse. Semantics has two main subcategories, firstly its compositional semantics, which is not important in this research, but the second one, namely lexical semantics is crucial and will be explained in this chapter. By analysing how a word acquires meaning, the connection between words and the level of meaning, we gain insight into lexical semantics. Cruse is a prominent figure in this topic, in his book “Lexical Semantics” (1986) he explores the complex nature of word meaning, emphasizing on the factors that shape it. Cruse highlights the complexity of word meaning can be fully understood by its context, emphasizing that word’s meaning is shaped by its relations within a given context. Words carry both denotative meaning, which is the words dictionary definition, and connotative meaning, which embraces the subjective and associative aspects of words. It is important to state that connotation and denotation are two present aspects of each word. Connotative meaning is more complex, as it can convey various subjective, cultural, or emotional sense that a word carries. Denotative meaning on the other hand is rather simple, as it represents its explicit or direct meaning. Great example of this phenomenon is the word “home,” the denotative meaning of “home” is a place where one lives, a residence. It refers to a physical space. However, the connotative meaning of “home” can evoke various emotions, such as feeling of warmth, safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. In conclusion, the exploration of semantics serves as a gateway to the intricate web of meaning within language.

Polysemy of words as defined by Crystal (*Dictionary of Linguistics*) is “a term in semantic analysis which refers to a lexical item that has multiple meanings” (p. 373). These related meanings may differ but are still connected by a shared idea. Crystal notes that the main issue in linguistics is the similarity of polysemy, and homonymy, which can be defined as two lexical items with the same phonological form, however, Crystal suggests that homonymous items would be further apart from each other in terms of meaning, or completely unrelated (*Dictionary of Linguistics*). In language, polysemy is very common as words often develop and acquire additional meanings over time through processes such as metaphor, metonymy. The word “man” is a perfect example, as it has several polysemous senses. It can refer to a human species, male of human species or an adult of the human species. Despite these different senses, they are all connected through the central idea of an entity associated with human species. Polysemy in the word “man” allows for diverse interpretations and contextual usage, showcasing the inherent complexity and flexibility of language. As a downside to polysemy and its versatility, it may be challenging in terms of interpretation and disambiguation, as its very context dependent. As for polysemy within the context of LoL, it can be observed in the diverse interpretations and

contextual usages of certain terms. For example, let's consider the word "pick" within the game. Firstly, it may refer to the act of selecting a specific champion or character that counters or synergizes well with the opposing team's composition before a match begins. Secondly, in the context of gameplay strategy, it can also be an attempt in the game to assassinate isolated champion to gain numerical superiority. Despite these distinct senses, both interpretations of "pick" are connected by the central idea of champion selection and strategic decision-making. In conclusion, polysemy provides players with the flexibility to adapt their tactics and make informed choices based on the context at hand. However, this versatility can also present challenges in terms of interpretation and disambiguation, as the meanings of certain terms are highly dependent on the specific in-game situation or the broader strategic context.

Another important topic in lexical semantics is the theory of semantic field. Originating in 1930s, it refers to a group of words related to each other based on their meanings and association. Lyons (1977) defines semantic field as “lexemes and other units that are semantically related, whether paradigmatically or syntagmatically, within a given language-system can be said to belong to, or to be members of, the same (semantic) field; and a field whose members are lexemes is a lexical field. A lexical field is therefore a paradigmatically and syntagmatically structured subset of vocabulary (or lexicon)” (p. 268). According to this theory, comprehending lexical meaning requires not just individual words but rather a cluster of semantically related words. Semantic relations refer to various types of relationships between words in terms of their meanings, such as synonymy, antonymy, hypernymy and hyponymy. Semantic field theory lacks established criteria to define the precise relationship between words, therefore understanding the meaning of a lexical item involves being aware of the associated semantic implications that come with it. Understanding a word outside of its semantic field without knowing any related words is not impossible, however, it is rather difficult. Within the LoL community, players and enthusiasts engage in discussions, strategizing, and analysis that heavily rely on the shared understanding of these lexical fields. Each field represents a cohesive set of words with related meanings and associations, allowing for effective communication within the gaming community. For instance, the "jungle" field includes words like "jungler," "camp," "buffs," and "ganking." These terms are semantically related to the specific role of the jungler. Understanding the terms and nuances of the jungle field is crucial for players who wish to excel in this role and communicate effectively with their teammates. By recognizing and familiarizing themselves with the various lexical fields present in LoL, players can enhance their understanding of the game's mechanics, communicate more effectively with teammates, and develop more nuanced strategies. The shared vocabulary within these fields enables concise and precise discussions, facilitates the exchange of knowledge, and contributes to the overall depth of the game's strategic landscape.

## 2.2 Stylistics

In terms of lexicology, it is essential to understand the idea of stylistics before understanding the concept of exclusivity. Stylistics is part of linguistics dealing with language based on context. As part of lexicology, stylistics focuses on how words and phrases contribute to meaning and effect in discourse through their stylistic properties. Linguists Leech and Short state, “stylistics, simply defined as the linguistic study of style, is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply an exercise in describing what use is made of language” (Leech & Short 2007, p. 11). Therefore, stylistics helps to enhance perception of language. This perception of language is typically the aim of stylistic analysis, which is the most essential part of stylistics.

Stylistic analysis is an important aspect of understanding how language works in unique contexts. One of the key components of stylistic analysis in lexicology is the study of vocabulary. As Simpson (2004) argues, to fully understand how a text communicates meaning, one must not only consider the linguistic features, but also consider the broader context and associated factors. This statement is further supported by Carter (1996), he states that stylistic analysis helps “to foster interpretive skills and to encourage reading between the lines of what is said” (p. 5). This includes looking at the methods in which speakers and writers use specialized vocabularies, metaphors, and different figurative language to create meaning and effect, because “the techniques of stylistic analysis are as much about deriving insights about linguistic structure and function as they are about understanding literary texts” (Simpson, 2004, p. 3). For example, the usage of medical terminology in a textual content about healthcare emphasizes the knowledge and authority of the speaker or author. Another important aspect of stylistic analysis in lexicology is the study of grammar, which is often defined as a set of rules. As Crystal (2006) defines it, “grammar is the study of all the contrasts of meaning that it is possible to make within sentences” (p. 97). This includes analysing the choices that speakers and writers make regarding sentence structure, tense, and voice, in addition to the usage of rhetorical devices such as repetition and parallelism. For instance, the use of passive voice in a text can create a sense of objectivity and distance, while using active voice can emphasize agency and action. Finally, stylistic analysis in lexicology additionally involves the study of rhetorical devices. Rhetorical devices are linguistic tools that add depth and persuasion to communication. Employed by speakers and writers, these devices include techniques such as alliteration, which emphasizes sounds through the repetition of initial consonants. Anaphora involves repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of the sentence, however the most notable is metaphor, a device that creates vivid comparison between unrelated concepts. Stylistic analysis can be used to understand communication in LoL, especially the use of jargon and specialized vocabulary. The game has its very own unique terms which can be used by players to talk with each other, such as “jungler” (a player who in most cases remains within the jungle vicinity of the map) and “gank” (to surprise attack an enemy

player). Stylistic analysis can help us to understand the meanings related to these phrases, as well as how they are used in unique contexts within the game. Analysing the language use in LoL can provide insights into the social dynamics and power structures within the game's player base. For example, analysing the use of language in player interactions can reveal patterns of cooperation and competition, as well as the methods in which players set up and hold their positions of power within the game. Stylistic analysis of language use can therefore provide valuable insights into the culture and social interactions of the game's community.

To close out this chapter, it must be mentioned that stylistic analysis is an essential tool for understanding how language is used to create which means and impact in unique contexts. By inspecting the choices that speakers and writers make regarding vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices, we can gain a deeper knowledge of the way language works in exclusive genres and for unique purposes. In the long run, the study of stylistic analysis in lexicology is vital for understanding the complicated relationship among language use, social and cultural elements, and psychological factors.

### **2.3 Lexical semantics vs Stylistics**

Lexical semantics and stylistics are two distinct branches of linguistics that focus on different aspects of language analysis. As defined by Crystal (*Dictionary of Linguistics*), semantics is a study of the semantic properties of natural languages, with emphasis on the organization of semantic space and the relationship between syntax and semantics. In this specialized branch, linguists explore the rich tapestry of meanings embedded in lexical items, considering aspects such as word sense, polysemy, homonymy, and semantic relations between words. Lexical semantics is essential for understanding how words contribute to the overall meaning of sentences and discourse. On the other hand, Crystal defines stylistics as a “branch of linguistics which studies the features of situationally distinctive uses (varieties) of language and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language” (*Dictionary of Linguistics*, p. 460). Based on this definition, stylistics engages in exploration of language, dissecting the contextual and situational factors that shape its distinctive uses. This involves an examination of linguistic elements such as vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and discourse structure, each playing a crucial role in conveying nuanced meanings. For example, standard or everyday language is most likely used within a group of friends having a casual conversation, however, a more formal language that respects grammar and puts emphasis on pronunciation and choice of words is very likely to be used in a resumé for example or during a job interview. In summary, while lexical semantics delves into the intricacies of individual word meanings and their relations, exploring the foundational components of

language, stylistics takes a broader perspective, scrutinizing the varied uses of language within different contexts. As one navigates through these linguistics branches, it becomes obvious that lexical semantics and stylistics both contribute to the dynamic and intricate nature of communication.

## 2.4 Slang

Slang is a phenomenon that is extremely difficult to define, even though it is often discussed, the definitions are not useful in any way to linguists. Coleman (2012) states that slang “represents whatever is most real in the present moment; it’s a badge of loyalties and aspirations” (p. 1). Coleman (2012) then argues that slang develops from a mostly spontaneous, yet lively and creative process. Adams brought a different definition, which says that slang “is a liminal language, a transition between or among broader linguistic interests and motives, and it is often impossible to tell, even in context, which interests and motives it serves” (Adams, 2009). It is very unlikely we will ever have a general definition of slang, with how much it is different in every group, generation, or nations. For example, the first definition of slang on the internet, when you type “What is slang”, is a vague interpretation. However, the ever-reliable online dictionary *CambridgeDictionary.org* says, “Slang is a very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people,” and as example, they state army slang and “chicken” as someone who is not very brave (“Slang”). Such slang expressions are one of the main reasons for these websites to exist, because what do people do when they do not understand a slang expression? They Google it. However, not even such renowned browser will help with some lesser-known or searched terms. Moreover, Crystal (*Txtng*) refers to slang as a tool to “show you are one of the gang” (p. 56). This assertion further proves that slang is often very informal and unconventional set of vocabulary used primarily within subcultures, or as Crystal refers, “gangs.” This exclusivity within subcultures can strengthen group identity. Besides language, slang provides two inherent qualities, that is social and identity related function. In social forms, slang can foster a sense of shared understanding. It serves as a linguistic bond that solidifies relationships among group members. Simultaneously, slang plays a vital role in shaping individual and collective identities, allowing for self-expression and the establishment of a unique subcultural identity. However, some slang expressions have the capacity to escape their group of origin, further highlighting the dynamic nature of language and its ability transcend cultural boundaries.



Examples of such expressions:

- YOLO, an acronym standing for “you only live once”. Yolo’s origin dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then it was used as a phrase. The acronym itself was popularized by rapper Drake in 2011. Its use is mainly on social media for activities that are either dangerous or exciting or both.
- SLAY. As for slay, one can consider that this word has undergone a semantic shift, from a brutal meaning of “kill”, to a slang term used to describe someone that has done so exceptionally well that they “killed it”. The second term is obviously not as literal as the first one as its usually used in terms of fashion or encouragement. Slay as a term is believed to have escaped from an African American LGBT community in the 1990s (“Slay”).
- SUS, an abbreviation for suspicious. The original word suspicious is rather simple and very well known, but the phenomenon “SUS” originates from an online game Among us, where people would shorten the term to communicate more effectively. Today, sus is used in informal conversations at the expense of suspicious.

Now that I have stated some examples, it’s important to acknowledge the criteria for words to be considered slang. As there is no proper definition due to constant changing behaviour of slang, linguists Dumas and Lighter (1978, pp. 14-15) argue that for expression to be true slang, it must meet at least two of the following criteria:

1. “Its presence will markedly lower, at least for the moment, the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing.” Therefore, such expression will not show presence within standard English, unless serving a specific rhetorical purpose.
2. “Its use implies the user’s special familiarity with the referent or the less statusful class of people.” This special familiarity is what is considered unacceptable by the majority of society.
3. “It is a tabooed term in ordinary discourse with persons of higher social status or greater responsibility.” Of course, what is taboo is subjective, based on the time when the conversation takes place, the class of people in the conversation and more.
4. “It is used in place of a well-known conventional synonym in order to (a) protect the user from the discomfort caused by the conventional item or (b) to protect the user from the

discomfort or the annoyance of further elaboration.” Ordinary synonyms protect both the audience and the reader, but in this category, it focuses solely on the user.

Although this extract by Dumas and Lighter is very old, it is still a relevant tool that can help with categorizing terms and deciding whether a term is slang or not.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge what the function of slang is, it serves various purposes within language and communication overall, acting as a dynamic and expressive tool that pushes traditional linguistic boundaries. At its core, slang functions as a powerful device for social identity and inclusion, allowing individuals to signal affiliation with specific groups or subcultures. Slang fosters a sense of fellowship and shared experience among its users, creating a linguistic bond that goes beyond the formalities of standard language. Moreover, slang enables an uplifted level of expressiveness and creativity, offering speakers the freedom to play with words. Its role in efficient communication is undeniable, serving as a shorthand that streamlines dialogue within communities. Slang’s ability to adapt swiftly to social change makes it a mirror reflecting evolving cultural norms, technological advancements, and emerging trends. Additionally, the use of slang can be an act of resistance or subversion, challenging established norms and providing linguistic space for alternative perspectives. Essentially, slang’s informality and relatability contribute to a more approachable and engaging communication style, making it a fascinating and indispensable aspect of human interaction.

#### **2.4.1 Internet slang**

Internet slang describes shortcuts, alternative words, or even symbols used to convey standard communication on the internet. This subcategory of slang is ever evolving, as many social media sites limit the number of characters one can type, therefore forcing users to convey as much information in limited space as possible. Definition supporting previous words is provided by Thorne (2007), when he defines cyberslang as “informal, abbreviated or humorous terms.” Now it is important to note where one can encounter internet slang, firstly, its social media, which is by far the most common representative, following that, slang is mainly utilized in text messaging and emails. Slang used on these places will consist of a variety of exclusive words, phrases, acronyms, and abbreviations. Website *urbandictionary.com* defines cyberslang as a term referring to words or expressions reserved for online communication (“Cyberslang”). It often incorporates acronyms, abbreviations, and other linguistic shortcuts to convey humour, express emotions, or communicate information quickly and efficiently.

Text messaging, a phenomenon that is most likely to be the hive of internet slang, has according to Thorne (2007), triggered changes in communication culture, particularly among

younger generations, introducing a new form of abbreviated language. However, Thorne (2007) later adds that outbreak of language as enormous as cyberslang has not contributed to the evolution of slang. When it comes to text messaging, one must mention emoticons, which are graphical representations of emotions and other nonverbal cues. As noted by Crystal (2011), emojis and emoticons are important for context and understanding of the tone that might be difficult to understand in textual conversation. Yet one must pay attention, because some emojis convey multiple meanings, i.e., the simple "smiley face" emoticon :-)) has evolved into a range of emotions it can cover. In given context, smiley face can be both an emoji for agreement and sarcasm, such difference can cause great misunderstanding. Other examples such as ;-)) (a wink) and :-D (laughing), suggest that the use of emoticons is a significant aspect of internet slang, and an important part of online communication. By using these graphical representations of emotion and nonverbal cues, users can enrich their online communication and create a more personal and expressive form of language.

Following the phenomenon of text messaging, it is necessary to introduce unintentional misspellings. Unintentional misspellings, often referred to as typos or typographical errors are common in written internet communication. These inadvertent occur when a person misspells a word or uses incorrect grammar while typing or writing. While the outbreak of spell-checking online tools can help to find such mistakes, they persist in various forms, from minor slip-ups in informal messages to more noticeable mistakes in professional documents. Additionally, misspellings can occur because of phonetic confusion, meaning the writer confuses two or more words that sound the same, however written are differently. Unintentional misspellings can sometimes add a touch of humour or confusion to a piece of writing, highlighting the human element in communication. Despite efforts to eliminate them, these errors serve as a reminder of the intricacies and challenges of language use, emphasizing the importance of proofreading and edition to ensure clear and accurate written expression. This importance is supported by Rozakis, she argues that misspellings happen due to the speed of writing, and the lack of proofreading (2008). An example of such error is "loose," which is often written instead of "lose" due to rush. In conclusion, unintentional misspellings occur because of the speed of writing, sometimes even phonetic confusion.

Even though the internet linguistics is still, as Crystal (2011) argues, in its infancy, it has become more than a major part of our lives. As we engage in the digital landscape, our language undergoes changes, giving more and more space to internet slang, a living and ever-evolving phenomenon. From emoticons expressing subtle emotions to witty acronym, this cyber dialect serves as a testament to languages adaptability. The prevalence of internet slang in our lives has reached stage where we get up, and instantly check emails, private messages, and social media for news. As Crystal (2006) argues, we live in a cyberspace.

#### 2.4.2 Unconventional spelling

Unconventional or non-standard spelling is vital in internet slang, as its sometimes more frequent than standard slang. Sensational spelling, as Rozakis refers to intentional misspelling is a "misspelling of a word to create a special effect" (Rozakis, 2008, p. 24). Words are often abbreviated, letters are dropped, and emphasis is laid on phonetic spellings. This phenomenon is often used in advertising, as it creates popular catch phrases, such as "Froot Loops" instead of "fruit loops." On the other hand, Crystal (*Txtng*) proposes that some writers "consciously manipulate the writing system" (p. 48). However, to answer whether a misspelling is intentional or not is quite impossible. Additionally, unintentional misspellings as described in previous chapter, arising from typing errors or phonetic confusion, highlight the fast-paced and informal environment. Furthermore, Rozakis explains that if one looks at a misspelled word for long enough, their brain will assume its correct (2008). As for examples of sensational misspellings, one must mention "Inglorious Basterds" instead of "Inglorious Bastards." Other way more common examples would be "ppl" instead of "people", which is used to save characters and simplifies the word, and "tho" instead of "though." Intentional misspellings within the realm of LoL are often humorous, for example the infamous phrase "Rito Please" used instead of Riot Please, in this case, players mock the developers of the game. Other examples can be mostly found in usernames, as players combine their favourite champion with something they adore, such as "Fizz Khalifa," which is a pun, combined from the champion Fizz and a famous rapper Wiz Khalifa. In summary, this trend is driven by the need for brevity and the desire to stand out in a digital landscape.

Secondly, next major group of misspelling is Leetspeak, also known as "1337speak" or simply "leet". Leetspeak works by replacing certain letters in words with similar-looking numbers or symbols, in order to create a code-like language. According to website *dictionary.com* leetspeak is a coded spelling system and language that uses letters and numbers instead of letters ("leetspeak"). Its origin is probably from the times of early internet for gamers and hackers creating their own language so outsiders can't understand them, but it has since become a more mainstream form of online communication.

Some examples of Leetspeak:

- "H3ll0" instead of "Hello"
- "1337" instead of "Leet"
- "@ss" instead of "ass"
- "pwn" instead of "own"
- "H4xor" instead of "hacker"

As can be seen in the first example, the number “3” is used to replace the letter “E” because they have a similar shape. While it can be a fun and creative way to communicate online, it is not a legitimate form of written English, simply because leetspeak violates many of the rules of standard spelling and grammar and can be difficult for non-initiates to understand. Leet symbols are primarily a way of communicating graphically, not linguistically. They are based on a different kind of logic from that of ordinary English spelling and are used for different purposes. As popular leetspeak may be, it is important to realize it’s very informal language and shouldn't be used as a substitute for English grammar and spelling. This phenomenon has been a crucial part of LoL’s written communication, mainly since players tend to use leetspeak to avoid getting banned, as they hide a very toxic message behind numbers and symbols. Some of the less offensive examples would be “d0g” or “n00b.”

To close this chapter, it is important to note, that while this type of communication may seem as invasive, slowly corrupting standard English, it is more of alternative way of using language that is both creative and playful. This new form of language has its own rules and conventions and requires a different set of skills to traditional writing. But rather than being a threat to traditional literacy, it is an extension of it, and offers exciting new opportunities for linguistic innovation and expression.

## **2.5 Vulgarism**

Now that we have gone through slang and its many forms, we shall look at vulgarisms. Vulgarisms or vulgarity refers to language, behaviour, or expressions that are considered crude, coarse, indecent, or offensive. It typically involves violating social or cultural norms of decency and can encompass various forms, including profanity, obscenity, or lewdness. Vulgarity is subjective and varies across different societies and contexts. It often involves the use of explicit or sexually explicit language, gestures, or actions that are considered inappropriate or offensive in polite or formal settings. According to an internet dictionary *Dictionary.com* vulgarism is “a vulgar expression; a word or phrase used only in common colloquial, and especially in coarse, speech” (“Vulgarism”). Website *Vocabulary.com* states that the origin of the word is from Latin “vulgaris” which can be translated as “the common people” which indicates that the origin refers to language or behaviour that was characteristic of the common people rather than the elite or educated classes (“Vulgarity”). Over time, the term evolved to encompass language or expressions that were considered crude, indecent, or offensive. In the context of LoL, vulgarisms play a significant role in shaping the community's linguistic landscape. Players engage in intense and competitive moments, where vulgar language, trash-talking (engaging in provocative, derogatory, or boastful speech or behaviour aimed at intimidating or mocking opponents), and

offensive expressions become prevalent. For example, phrases like “ur trash,” “get rekt,” “suck it,” or “git gud” are often directed towards opponents to provoke, dominate, or assert superiority. They create a distinct atmosphere of competitive banter, contributing to the formation of an exclusive linguistic group within the game. Moreover, vulgarisms extend beyond in-game interactions. Player-created content, such as memes, forums, and social media platforms revolving around the game, are infused with vulgar language. Players adopt and circulate specific vulgarisms, integrating them into the game's culture. For instance, phrases like “gg ez” (meaning good game, easy) are often used sarcastically or mockingly to taunt opponents after a victory, adding an element of vulgarity to post-game interactions. This shared linguistic repertoire reinforces the sense of identity and belonging among players, contributing to the lexical exclusivity observed within the LoL player base. Understanding the use of vulgarisms in LoL sheds light on how language serves as a tool for social dynamics and linguistic exclusivity within the gaming community. By examining the impact and consequences of vulgar language, we can gain valuable insights into the formation of player identities, player to player interactions, and the perception of the game by external audiences.

## **2.6 Word forming processes**

Within the context of language transformation, we shall closely look at word forming processes and semantic shift, which are key for research part of this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the transformation of words and their meanings over time and explore the processes through which words form and evolve, both in form and meaning. These processes shed light on how languages expand their vocabulary and adapt. Word formation is a method of creating new words or modifying old existing words. It explores the processes how new vocabulary is formed and added to the language. By analysing these methods, we gain insight into the creation of new words. After that, we shall look at semantic shift, a phenomenon which explores how meaning of words change over time.

### **2.6.1 Abbreviations and Acronyms**

Abbreviations, a linguistic phenomenon in slang and internet language. These shortened forms of words serve as efficient tools for conveying information are crafted by selecting key letters or components, streamlining language, saving characters, and faster comprehension. Crystal (*Dictionary of Linguistics*) argues that there are multiple ways of word shortening, namely acronyms, initialisms, and clippings. In formal context, such as academic or professional writing, abbreviations are often standardized and adhere to specific style guides, enhancing clarity. An example of formal abbreviation is “ave” for “avenue,” “etc.” for “et cetera.” As for informal, a

much more developed group of abbreviations, example would be “FIY” meaning “For Your Information.” The styling of abbreviations is inconsistent, and often includes many variations. In contrast, informal abbreviations thrive in casual conversations, notably in digital platforms and everyday conversation. When it comes to casual conversations, Crystal (*Txtng*) argues that such conversations typically happen between two or more friends. That means that the message will likely be “intimate and local” (p. 52). As for the forming of these terms, some abbreviations may be formed by omitting words from the middle, such as “Oct.” for “October”, other abbreviations are for names of states, such as “TX” as for “Texas.” With the general idea of abbreviations explained, it is important to distinguish its subcategories, namely acronyms (initialisms), and contractions.

An acronym is a specific type of abbreviation formed from the initial letters of an expanded phrase, with those letters pronounced as one. Acronyms have become an integral part of communication in various domains. In professional and technical fields, acronyms streamline discourse, offering quick and recognizable references, such as “NASA” (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) or “FBI” (Federal Bureau of Investigation). Same as abbreviations, acronyms have infiltrated everyday communication, especially internet language. Beyond their functional brevity, acronyms often ascend their literal meanings, creating a shared language and cultural shorthand within specific communities. Initialisms, a subcategory of acronyms, as defined by Crystal (*Dictionary of Linguistics*) “reflect the separate pronunciation of initial letters of the constituent words” (p. 1). Therefore, initialisms are in fact acronyms that are not pronounced as a complete word, but rather pronounced as a sequence individual letters, for example “VIP,” as for “very important person.”

Contraction as defined by Crystal (*Dictionary of Linguistics*), is “a process of phonologically reducing a linguistic form so that it comes to be attached to an adjacent linguistic form” (p. 111). Simply, contractions are a shortened versions of verbs, syllables, or word groups, by omitting internal sounds or letters and usually adding an apostrophe. Only certain words can be contracted, specifically small and common words such as “not,” “is,” or “are.” Other two categories are pronouns, such as “I,” or “He,” and modal verbs, for example “can,” or “will.” Even though they are a combination of multiple words, they count only as one. Even though contractions share some semantic and phonetic functions, they should not be confused with other abbreviations and even clipping.

With the major subcategories of abbreviations explained, a more in-depth analysis is more than appropriate, since most internet abbreviations have multiple meanings or are a combination of abbreviation and phonetic translation, such as “B4” meaning Be(four) = before. The perfect candidates for such analysis are two of the most popular abbreviations “lol and “btw.”

Firstly, “btw,” is an initialism, meaning each letter is pronounced individually when said out loud, and it is one of the most used abbreviations of the modern world. This phenomenon has been in use for decades, primarily in written communication such as memos, and emails. With the growth of social media, the use of “btw” has become widespread, especially in informal internet communication, such as texting or instant messages. The abbreviation has become a useful tool for conveying additional information or a side note during a conversation, without disrupting the main topic or to introduce a topic or add information that is not directly related to the main point of the conversation. As for the origin, it is assumed that “btw” started to be used in the late 1990s or early 2000s. According to Cambridge dictionary, “btw” is used to add an extra comment or information, pointing out something that is not the main topic of discussion (“Btw”). Today, it is widely recognized and used in digital communication. Overall, while the usage has remained consistent in its general meaning and purpose, its frequency and context have evolved with the changing communication technology and social norms.

Secondly, “lol.” This phenomenon can be considered both acronym and initialism, as there are two ways of pronouncing it. First, a more frequent pronunciation is “lawl” or [lɑ:l] this way would fit into the category of acronyms. Second, a rarely used pronunciation is “el-oh-el” or [,ɛl, oʊ' ɛl] which would be the initialism, as each initial letter is pronounced. Nevertheless, it is by far the most diverse and widespread abbreviation of modern world. It expresses a body reaction, laughter in particular. As can be found on online website *Dictionary.com*, “lol” is used to indicate that something is funny or amusing and is often used in electronic communication” (“Lol”). However, since its outbreak, the meaning of the acronym has grown to be ambiguous, as stated by McWhorter, “lol is being used in a very particular way. It is a marker of empathy. It is a marker of accommodation” (McWhorter, 7:26). This highlights the social factor of “lol's” meaning, as nowadays it is closely tied to the social norms and practices of online communication. As such, the meaning is not always fixed or static, however rather dynamic, and subject to change based on the cultural and social contexts in which it is used. Simply, “lol” has gone from a term solely for laughter, to as McCulloch (2019, p. 125) refers, “social lubricant,” that softens internet communication, which is often cold and emotionless. Based on this comparison, the abbreviation has undergone a semantic shift, and it is more than evident that semantic shift carried this term into spoken language. Lastly, because “lol” has evolved beyond its original meaning, which gave rise to plethora of creative variants and stylizations that reflect the diverse nature of internet. Variants like “lolz,” “lulz,” or “lel,” are often employed to add a touch of playfulness or to convey more relaxed tone. The deliberate misspelling or alternation of “lol” is not only a nod to the informal language and humorous context, but also a demonstration of the internet’s ability to redefine language.



### **2.6.2 Word clipping**

Word clipping, also called truncation or shortening, is word-forming process based on the principle of removing segments to create shortened version. Shortenings are a form of abbreviations and are used for the sake of informality and efficiency. Crystal notes that shortenings are typically the sorts of word forms that occur most frequently in everyday language because they tend to be the shortest and easiest to say and write (*Txtng*, 2008). However, it such term is not just a new word with no linguistic value. As Marchand states, “The difference between the short and the long word is obviously not one of logical content” (Marchand, 1969, p. 357). Marchand then supports his statement by showing an example of “book” and “booklet,” where booklet in writing looks like a small book, thus adding the logic of “small” to it. The difference between the two terms lies in their usage in speech. Both terms are interchangeable in each of its context, the shorter term often belongs to slang and the original word to standard English. Marchand then notes another shift in linguistic value in the means of emotional background, as in “Mex” for “Mexican.” It is crucial to note that neither the clipped part nor the clipped result is a morpheme in the linguistic system. “The moment a clipping loses its connection with the longer word of which it is a shortening, it ceases to belong to word-formation, as it has then become an unrelated lexical unit” (Marchand, 1969, p. 357). There are many subcategories of clipping, but the most important are back-clipping and fore-clipping. Back-clipping is where the beginning is retained, no matter where the stress is, such as “mic” for “microphone,” where the stress is on the first syllable or “gym” for “gymnastics,” where the stress is on the second syllable. Fore-clippings are simple but not very frequent, some examples would be “plane” for “airplane,” or “van” for “caravan.” Clipping in LoL has led to the formation of various exclusive lexical terms that are widely used among players. These terms often emerge from the need for efficient communication during intense gameplay. By shortening longer words or phrases, players can quickly convey information without sacrificing clarity.

### **2.6.3 Semantic expansion**

The term semantic change refers to the process of words changing their meaning over time, whether it is narrowing or broadening. It is key to note that such process does not happen overnight, it is a gradual process, which can take up to years. This phenomenon often occurs when societal values change, which means each societal group experience this change differently. There are three major subcategories, namely broadening, narrowing, and semantic shift. Broadening is when the meaning of the term becomes broader, it still means everything it used to mean and more. As Fromkin et. al. (2013) suggests, holiday once meant a day of religion, so called “holy day,” but today the meaning is simply that we do not have to work. This phenomenon has grown massively with the rapidly growing popularity of the internet. As Fromkin et. al. (2013)

states, “Google was broadened first from the name of a company to a verb meaning to use that company’s search engine on the internet,” and from there, the word Google has simply become the word for “search” (p. 361). Narrowing is a process in which a word becomes more specific over time. Meaning the new meaning is narrowed from the original meaning, this process can be also referred to as “semantic restriction.” The perfect example of narrowing is “The word hound has used to be the general term for dog, like German Hund, today hound refers to a certain class of dog breeds” (Fromkin et. al. 2013). Lastly, meaning shift is a change where a lexical item may change its meaning. It is often found with words from old English, for example “knight” was once a term for “youth,” however later the meaning shifted to “an armoured man on a horse” (Fromkin et. al. 2013).

Factors for such changes are often one of metonymy, metaphor, or ellipsis. Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted with another word that is closely related to it, often by association. Crystal argues, this rhetorical device involves using a term associated with something to represent the thing itself, rather than using the actual name of the thing (*Dictionary of Linguistics*). It relies on the understand of a shared context and relationship between the two elements. For example, “The White House issued a statement.” In this case, The White House is used metonymically to refer to the president, or “The pen is mightier than the sword,” here “the pen” refers to writing or communication, while “the sword” represents physical force. This metonymy indicates that words can be more powerful than physical force. Metaphor is a process that involves making a direct comparison between two completely unrelated things, highlighting a similarity. Metaphors assert that one thing is another, used to convey abstract and vivid concepts. One of the classic examples of metaphor is “Time is a thief,” here time is compared to thief, suggesting that both take things away from us. Ellipsis occurs, when two words are frequently used within a sentence until they acquire the same meaning, as in “to starve,” which used to mean “to die,” it was often related to conversations about hunger, therefore the meaning shifted to “die of hunger.”

As for semantic expansion in the context of my work and LoL, semantic change extends to the game's broader terminology and jargon. For instance, the term "ADC" (Attack Damage Carry) traditionally refers to a ranged damage dealer focused on dealing consistent damage in the late game. However, with the introduction of non-traditional ADC champions, players have expanded the meaning of "ADC" to include any champion in the bottom lane position regardless of their damage type. This semantic expansion allows for a more inclusive and adaptable understanding of the role within team compositions. In addition to that, semantic expansion plays a role in the development of guides, tutorials, and educational content within the community. As players experiment with different playstyles and strategies, they contribute to the expansion of the lexicon by introducing new terms or redefining existing ones. By understanding the process

of semantic expansion through examples like these, players can effectively communicate, adapt their strategies, and stay up to date with the game's language.

## 2.7 In-groups

In-groups are a fundamental part of human social behaviour, providing people with a feel of belonging and identity. One could define in-group as people that share their beliefs, characteristics and feel united together. In-groups can vary relying on the context and are based on a wide range of factors, including ethnicity, faith, gender, age, social class, or shared experiences. The idea of in-group is important as it affects our attitudes and behaviours toward individuals of our very own group as well as towards members of another group. As Tajfel (1978) argues, an in-group is a group of people, who share a sense of belonging, a feeling of common identity, who can form such groups of shared identity within minutes. The feeling of belonging, or just being a part of a group can root in shared experiences, beliefs, or interests. Key factor is that most members of an in-group get along very well and have positive interactions. Such behaviour results in members favouring each other and identifying with one another, creating a sense of unity, which may in some causes lead to favouritism and maybe even discrimination towards out-group members, as they are seen as distant and different. Factors that result in forming an in-group have been studied extensively, with researchers trying to understand the interactions in the groups and outcomes of in-group and out-group differences. This has also been implemented to real-world situations, along with intergroup conflict, prejudice, and favouritism and has implications for promoting intergroup harmony and lowering social inequalities, tying members of given in-group together, as they share a common sense of identity in relation to their interests or ideas, creating a feeling of togetherness.

A few examples of in-groups can be:

- Circle of relatives: this could include parents, siblings, and extended family members who share a close relationship and sense of belonging.
- Friends: this can include a close circle of friends who share similar interests and values, and frequently spend time collectively.
- Sports teams: This can include a team of athletes who work together towards a common goal, and often form close bonds through their shared experiences.
- School or university groups: This can include groups of students who share a common academic or extracurricular interest, such as a club or organization.
- Religious or cultural groups: This can include groups of people who share a common religion or cultural background, and often come together for worship, celebration, or social events.

- Workplace teams: This can include colleagues who work together towards a common goal or project, and often form close bonds through their shared experiences in the workplace.

These are just a few examples of in-groups, and there are many more that exist in different contexts and cultures.

### **2.7.1 In-group favouritism**

In-group favouritism, a term also known as in-group bias, refers to a phenomenon in which people tend to pick and exhibit more positive attitudes towards members of their own group, often at the price of individuals from outgroups. This bias has been widely studied in social psychology and may lead to negative outcomes which include discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping. Understanding the underlying psychological processes that drive this bias is vital in reducing intergroup conflicts. A process that divides people into groups based on their similarities is called social categorization and it is one of the reasons favouritism is on the rise. According to Tajfel and Turner (2001) and their theory of intergroup conflict, once individuals identify with a group, they are likely to develop biases, view their group as superior and show more favourable attitudes towards their fellow group members. Additionally, the bias can be amplified through social identity theory (Hogg, 2006), which suggests that individuals categorize themselves into different social categories as a means of creating their own social identity. As a result, intergroup discrimination may occur. As introduced by self-esteem hypothesis (Abrams & Hogg, 1988), successful intergroup discrimination may elevate self-esteem of the group, however, lowered self-esteem should spark intergroup discrimination. In conclusion, in-group favouritism has severe consequences for interpersonal and intergroup relations. Therefore, acknowledging and addressing in-group favouritism can cause a more equitable and inclusive society. Any actions aimed at reducing this bias including increasing awareness, developing intergroup contact, promoting empathy toward outgroups, and emphasizing shared identities to minimize differences between groups. By adopting these measures, we should attempt lowering intergroup conflicts and promoting harmony and inclusivity in our societies.

### **2.7.2 Out-groups**

Outgroup is a social group of people with which you do not identify or sympathize. This phenomenon is also known as out-group bias. As Hogg and Vaughan (2010) state, “wherever there is a group to which people belong (in-group), there are other groups to which those people do not belong (out-group)” (p. 209). Such groups are essential for humans, as we are social beings, deeply influenced by those groups, the membership is often a source of identity, pride and

belonging. However, in out-group, which is viewed as the negative opposite of in-group, its membership is often associated with terms such as differentiation, prejudice, and discrimination. Members of out-group are often judged by their lack of characteristics that they should possess such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or nationality, among others. Just as important as characteristics is our behaviour, realizing how we look at outsiders is important because it can influence both our attitudes and the members of an out group. We as individuals tend to view members our own in-group more favourably than members of the out-group, leading to an intergroup bias and hatred. This behaviour leads to negative outcomes such as bullying. This part of out-group has been a target of study in social psychology, with researchers investigate the beginning of bias, the dynamics of intergroup interactions. This research has implications for promoting intergroup harmony and restoring equality by reinforcing positive attitudes and behaviours towards members of other groups and promoting a sense of shared identity. It is hard to pick an example of out-groups, since it is any group of people we do not agree with, for example:

- Apple and Android users – world is divided into two groups, making each side an out-group for the other.
- Prisoners – not only the gangs are out-groups to each other, the guards are out-group as well.
- Rival sports teams: In sports, fans of one team hold a negative relationship with rivals, which can even become hate.
- Ethnic or racial minorities: Members of dominant ethnic or racial groups may view minority groups as different or inferior, leading to negative attitudes and discrimination.
- LGBTQ+ individuals: Some people may view those who identify as LGBTQ+ as different or immoral, leading to negative attitudes and discrimination.
- Religious groups: Members of one religious group may view those from another religion as different or misguided, leading to negative attitudes and conflict.
- Immigrants or foreigners: In some countries, immigrants or foreigners may be viewed as different or unwelcome, leading to negative attitudes and discrimination.

In conclusion, in-groups and out-groups are stereotypes that we see each day, but one of the groups is considered “cool” and the opposite is usually struggling, they can be described through social, cultural, or other types of group membership, together with ethnicity, religion, or career. In-group members regularly view themselves just like one another and share a sense of shared identity and purpose, while out-group participants are seen as special or weird. In-group members frequently show favouritism or preference towards other in-group members, while showing bias in the direction of out-group members. While both groups get into a social or

physical conflict, it almost never ends well, examples of injustice or discrimination, or in positive cases it may serve as a foundation for cooperation and mutual help, depending at the context and the people involved. Both in-groups and out-groups are important topics in social psychology, as they create our perceptions of us around other people, whether we fit in or don't, and how we behave towards each other. It is important to recognize the potential dangers and biases that may form from group membership and work toward promoting positivity and respect for all people, no matter what group they belong to.

### **2.7.3 Out-group Derogation**

Derogation in an out-group can be viewed as an opposite to in-group favouritism. It is a topic that has been extensively studied in social psychology and can be considered a phenomenon nowadays. Derogation in out-group can be defined as making negative opinion on purpose against group which one is not a member of, or negatively characterizing them (Jackson et al., 1996). In ordinary life, derogation can be seen as holding prejudice or bullying. Such negative occurrence as derogation is often connected to self-esteem and social categories such as race and age. According to Harwood (1999), studies show that young people raise their self-esteem by comparing themselves to elderly people, just as elderly people prefer negative news for young people. Derogation can arise very easily, all it takes is a different point of view at the differences between the in-group and out-group, and will in most cases lead to negative behaviour, such as discrimination or bullying. As mentioned before, derogation is the root of discrimination and has been observed across all contexts, such as race, religion and many more. Out-group derogation remains a significant challenge and a big problem with no real solution on the horizon, which is tragic, because promoting positive intergroup relations and reducing prejudice in society is something people should focus on.

### **2.7.4 In-groups in slang and jargon**

Slang in in-group can be defined as an exclusive language for each group. Every group has its own set of slang terms and phrases which is exclusive to given group, whether it sounds unfamiliar or completely incomprehensible. According to Adams (2009), language systems private to given group can establish inclusivity and harden social identity among group members, and even make the group unique. However, unique language might result in people outside given group not understanding what you are referring to or worse, they can assume you are mocking them, it can be considered a code language if the groups vocabulary is extensive. Many factors are playing an important role, when it comes to what the slang is based on, it can be very diverse, such as age, gender, ethnicity, work career or just lifestyle. Just imagining any group and thinking about their jargon is a great example of exclusivity and their jargon, they can be groups of skateboarders, metal enthusiasts, gamers, global warming protestants, which are all great

examples, as they all have their own unique sets of slang terms that are specific to their group of friends or whole communities. As de Klerk (2005) argues, the sense of belonging, and group identification motivates slang usage, as it represents social inclusion. The sense of intimacy and the feeling of being unique in a way, simply talking with your friends and knowing people around are not familiar with the discourse. However, the drawback of such exclusivity in terms of language lies in potential mockery directed at people outside one's group. It is obvious that slang exclusive to a group is highly dependent on context, which means understanding the group might be difficult but rewarding, as it can provide valuable opinions. As defined by *dictionary.com*, jargon is "the language, especially vocabulary, peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group" ("Jargon").

To explain jargon to the detail, it is important to know the difference between slang and jargon. Slang is any nonstandard, informal language used by groups, but jargon is more complex and formal, unique to a special field. Meaning that only groups that have large, more specialized dictionary should be considered speaking in jargon. For example, on Academic ground jargon can be used to convey complex ideas and theories, while in professional settings, it may be used to communicate valuable information quickly and efficiently among colleagues who share a common understanding of the specialized language. The use of jargon can also function as a barrier to outsiders just like slang in general, creating a feeling of power and intimacy in the group. The downside, same as for slang, is being too exclusive which can often lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication with people outside the group. Understanding the use of jargon in different contexts is difficult but rewarding as it can provide valuable insights into the social dynamics, power structures, and general knowledge how these groups work.

Both in-group slang and jargon serve important functions in communication within specific social groups and subcultures. In-group slang is creating a feeling of privacy and uniqueness and is mostly associated with informal language. Jargon is considered much more technical and formal, can be associated with specific fields, disciplines, or professions. They both share many similarities, but differ in formality, they both are distinct forms of language that serve different purposes in different contexts. Understanding the use of these specialized forms of language can provide valuable insights.

## **2.8 What is League of Legends**

League of Legends, generally known as LoL, is a famous multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game developed and managed by Riot Games. The game is exclusive to computers, as it has not been released anywhere else. A mobile game version exists; however, it is so simplified that I consider it a different game. Since its launch in 2009, the game has gained huge popularity, mainly since the year 2018 in which many new players began playing and since then it has grown

to be one of the most played online video games in the world. With millions of players worldwide, LoL has created a large community and an active esports scene. In the game, players choose the role of a “champion,” a mighty hero with unique abilities and strengths, and compete against a team of different champions. The objective is to destroy the enemy team's base, which is known as the “Nexus.” Players start the game at level 1 and gain experience points (XP) through killing enemy minions and champions, destroying turrets, and completing objectives. Through levelling up, their champion becomes a lot stronger, upgrading their abilities and increasing their base stats. The primary game mode is played in a five versus five arena, with each team starting on opposite sides of the map (Blue side vs red side). Each player chooses a champion to play as, and the team must work collectively to coordinate attacks, defend their team base, and control objectives on the map. The map is split into three lanes, each with turrets that need to be destroyed to advance closer to the enemy base. There also are neutral monsters located inside the jungle, which players can defeat to gain gold and XP. Players can buy items and get stronger and “scale” by using gold earned throughout the game, which give additional stats and abilities to their champion. There are numerous game modes with unique maps that are temporary, in most cases added during some events, such as Christmas. Very popular is game mode known as ARAM, which is basically just one lane and players have random champions, which could be understood from ARAM meaning “all random all mid”. In general, LoL is incredibly strategic and competitive game that calls for teamwork, large amount of individual skill, quick thinking, and finally constant positivity, which means it is key not to surrender. With its active player base and esports scene, LoL has gained massive reputation through the years, it has become a cultural phenomenon, attracting players from all over the world. The game's regular updates and improvements ensure that it remains fresh and thrilling for gamers, making it one of the most beloved and enduring online video games of all time.

### **2.8.1 Communication in League of Legends**

With the basics of the game explained, it is logical to examine the dynamics of communication within LoL. There are many ways to communicate, from text chat to smart pings and voice communication. There are multiple text chats in LoL, each has a different purpose. Firstly, its pre-game chat (champion select) where its mostly just strategy and team coordination such as what champion to pick, which lane to play for and overall win conditions for the team. In-game chat is where I took all most of my data from and is the most frequently used, because of how fast paced LoL is, they constant coordinating with your teammates is vital for having a chance at winning. Lastly, post-game chat, which is rarely used since players tend to quit the game or look for next one. Post-game chat is used mostly when a player is unleashing his anger at a person that made him mad. Next method of communication are smart pings, smart pings are



probably the most important and most used tool even though they are nonverbal. Pings are contextual messages that represent the sound they make on the minimap. In LoL, pings can be considered onomatopoeic as all pings in the game have distinctive sound, and both the sound and the visual effect correlate. When players click on the map to issue a ping, it generates a distinctive sound effect accompanied by a visual indicator. They can convey many meanings, varying from a signal to run or fall back to asking for assistance. The most frequently used smart ping must be “caution ping,” which is often conveying a hidden message of “missing in action.” Lastly, its voice chat, which is barely used due to it being only available for people that are playing together on purpose. For example, if a player gets in game, and wants to join voice with four of his teammates, he can’t, there is no option for that. One might say that it is because of the toxicity and the amount of trolling which occurs in LoL, however, not having team voice chat in the most popular online video game is disappointing. Voice chat can be accessed by clicking the microphone icon at the bottom of the screen. In addition to that, majority of players are communicating together on third party programs, such as Discord or TeamSpeak. This way is the most used for its simplicity and better quality.

### **3 Practical part**

In my research focused on LoL chat, I undertook an investigation to examine the extent to which the language used in the game is exclusive. Specifically, I sought to determine whether the most frequently used words and phrases were common knowledge among the general population, used within online gaming communities in general, or exclusive to LoL players. Secondly, I have divided each term into a category of its word-forming process, such categories were abbreviations and acronyms, clippings, and lastly, a category for expressions that are either individually represented, or are standard words, therefore not a product of any word-forming process. To conduct this analysis, I utilized #LancsBox, a powerful linguistic analysis tool that enabled me to explore the patterns and trends within the chat logs. By inputting the collected chat data into #LancsBox, I was able to extract meaningful insights regarding the prevalence and context of certain words and expressions. This approach provided a precise and systematic methodology for analysing the language used in the game's chat, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of its inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Through this research, I aimed to shed light on the communication dynamics within the LoL community.

#### **3.1 Method of research**

For my research project, I collected data from LoL chat logs and via #LancsBox, I constructed a list of most frequently used terms. To capture a comprehensive view of player interactions, I collected data from various chat sources, including team chat, all chat (where all 10 players can communicate), champion select chat, and post-game lobby chat. By including these different chat channels, I managed to capture the entirety of written communication dynamics within the game's community. Throughout the data collection process, I followed strict rules such as ethical guidelines, guarding the privacy of individual players and anonymizing all collected data. This extensive dataset, consisting of chat logs from team chat, all chat, champion select, and post-game lobby, provided a valuable resource for examining the complex patterns, dynamics, and social factors that shape communication and player behaviour in online gaming environments.

##### **3.1.1 #LancsBox**

#LancsBox is a powerful linguistic analysis tool that I have utilized for my research on the game chat. #LancsBox is a software developed by researchers at Lancaster University, designed to assist in the analysis of textual data. With its complex set of analytical tools, #LancsBox enables researchers dive deep into the linguistic aspects of a given corpus. In the context of my research, it has helped me to gain insights into the exclusivity and inclusivity of language used in game chat. By inputting the collected chat logs into the program, I was able to construct a list of most recurrent terms. Through #LancsBox I was able to come up with research

supported by a robust and systematic approach, allowing me to extract valuable findings about the language dynamics within the LoL community and the extent of accessibility and exclusivity of the vocabulary used in the game. I personally used the function “Word Frequency Analysis” which enabled me to analyse the frequency distribution of words and phrases within a corpus. This function helps identify commonly used terms and highlights linguistic patterns and trends. Other than that, #LancsBox has functions such as corpus management for efficient organization, preprocessing and annotation tasks like tokenization and part-of-speech tagging, and many more.

### **3.2 Research**

Overall, the corpus consists of 100 732 words collected from LoL chat, pre-game lobby (champion select) and post-game lobby. I processed all these words using the Words function in the already mentioned program, #Lancsbox, however, I encountered the challenge of handling inflection in the word list. Inflection can lead to multiple variations of a word with the same underlying meaning, which can complicate the analysis. Fortunately, thanks to the powerful functionality of #LancsBox, I was able to address this issue effectively. Using this program, I leveraged its built-in capabilities to filter and normalize the word list, removing inflections such as plurals, verb conjugations, or tense variations. This allowed me to consolidate words with the same core meaning into a single entry, resulting in a more streamlined and accurate representation of the vocabulary used. By utilizing #LancsBox's inflection filtering function, I was able to focus on the essential content and patterns of language within LoL's chat, enabling me to gain clearer insights into its linguistic dynamics. Additionally, inflection is not as prominent as in traditional spoken language due to the nature of online communication and the limitations of text-based interactions. However, there are still instances where inflection can be observed. One example is the use of repeated letters or elongated spellings to convey emphasis or intensity. For instance, instead of simply typing “gank,” a player might write “gggank” or “gankeeeed” to express the gravity or significance of the situation. These variations in spelling through inflection contribute to the overall tone and emotional expression within the game's chat. It is important to note that LoL slang and its inflectional patterns may vary among players and communities, evolving over time as new trends emerge. Overall, only nouns filtered by inflection function and abbreviations were included in the final corpus. This approach ensured that the corpus comprised words with stable meanings, eliminating variations due to inflection and abbreviations. By focusing on nouns, the corpus provided a solid foundation for analysing the linguistic aspects of LoL chat. It allowed for a more accurate exploration of the vocabulary used within the game, shedding light on the unique language dynamics and patterns that exist in the community.

*Table 1: Twenty-five most frequently used terms*

	Word/abbreviation	Number of entries
1.	gg	4855
2.	fuck	4532
3.	flash	4019
4.	ff	3464
5.	wtf	3453
6.	gank	3114
7.	lol	2950
8.	ez	2927
9.	gap	2698
10.	omg	2569
11.	ss	2417
12.	wp	2354
13.	BotRK	2130
14.	nash	1833
15.	cs	1391
16.	ffs	1236
17.	ping	1112
18.	ult	989
19.	feed	910
20.	gj	652
21.	ward	600
22.	stfu	584
23.	scale	545
24.	jg	366
25.	idk	214

I have decided to divide my analysis of these 25 most frequent terms into distinct groups based on their exclusivity. This categorization aimed to differentiate between terms known exclusively by LoL players, terms known to online game players in general, and those considered common knowledge across various contexts. The criteria according to which the words were divided will be given in each of the relevant paragraphs. Each of the three groups will have a list of terms included and a graph to visualize the data.

### **3.3 Terms exclusive to players of League of Legends**

Firstly, its key to state the criteria according to which I judged whether the expression is exclusive to LoL players or to all online game players. Exclusive in the context of LoL is a term, that has a specific meaning and is often inflected in various meanings depending on the state of the game. However, some terms might have similar meaning in other games of the same genre – Multiplay Online Battle Arena (MOBA). As there are no works dealing with this issue, I have

worked with online dictionaries of the two supreme MOBA games, LoL and Dota2, and then compared if each term is used in both games, if not, the given term is exclusive.

The dictionary I used is called *Fandom.com*, which is a digital platform where fans of specific topic gather, create and curate a comprehensive repository of information related to given topic. Even though these platforms are not officially related to companies that made each game, they are exceptionally well made and maintained with credible information. For example, website *leagueoflegends.fandom.com* is as close to official dictionary as one can get (“Terminology”). This website serves as a textbook for the game, as one can find everything, from terminology to character stories to instructions on how to play the game. In this case, I have worked with already mentioned terminology, and with glossary for Dota2, which is as well maintained as the one for LoL (“Glossary”).

*Table 2: Terms considered exclusive to LoL players*

	Word/abbreviation	Number of entries
1.	flash	4019
2.	ff	3464
3.	gap	2698
4.	BotRK	2130
5.	nash	1833
6.	scale	545

These exclusive lexical terms were divided into three groups based on their word-forming processes. By categorizing these exclusive lexical terms based on their word-forming processes, we can gain insights into the linguistic creativity and adaptations within the LoL community, showcasing the development of a specialized vocabulary that enhances communication and gameplay strategies.

### **3.3.1 Abbreviations and Acronyms**

Abbreviations and acronyms are widely used in LoL and many other gaming communities as a word-forming technique to create time efficient terms. Both word-forming processes are explained to detail in the theoretical part (see chapter 2.6). Both forms serve as shorthand representations of longer terms, allowing players to communicate more quickly and efficiently during gameplay. In the context of LoL, several abbreviations and acronyms have become prevalent and ingrained in the community's communication. To avoid confusion, in my final results and in thesis overall, initialism is considered a subcategory of acronyms, therefore will be classified under acronyms.

First, we shall look at “ff.” The abbreviation “ff” stands for forfeit. From a linguistic perspective, “ff” represents a form of shortening, where the word “forfeit” has been condensed to create a shortened and recognizable term. This process of shortening words or phrases is a common linguistic phenomenon in digital communication, allowing players to save time and effort. While the act of forfeiting games may be common across various online gaming communities, in LoL, it is specifically referred to as “surrender.” However, within LoL, the abbreviation “ff” has become exclusive to represent the concept of surrendering and ending the match prematurely. This lexical adaptation not only facilitates communication during gameplay but also reflects the community's familiarity with the act of forfeiting and their acceptance of the widely recognized abbreviation “ff” for this purpose. LoL players usually call for a “ff” vote when they believe victory is highly unlikely. It's important to note that for the surrender vote to pass, a minimum of 70% of the team must agree to surrender. Typically, the request to surrender arises during the final stages of a game, when the outcome seems inevitable.

Secondly, it's “BotRK”, short for Blade of the Ruined King. This term is an acronym, as it consists of initial letter of each word from the name. This condensed version of this expression is very popular among players and the original version is barely used. Blade of the Ruined King is the only item from the game on this list, which might seem strange considering it is ranked as only the 6<sup>th</sup> most popular item in LoL according to website *Leagueographs.com* (“Items”). The simplest explanation is that this item has been in the game for over twelve years and has always been very popular amongst players. The acronym “BotRK” is used by players to refer to this item quickly and efficiently during gameplay. This item's origin can be traced back to the game's lore and thematic universe, often associated with a significant character or event.

### **3.3.2 Products of Clipping**

Clipping is a word-forming process commonly observed in language, including within the lexicon of LoL. It involves shortening a word by removing one or more of its syllables or sounds to create a new term (see chapter 2.6.2). This process allows players to express complex ideas or concepts using shorter and more convenient words.

The first item is “Nash,” a clipped version of “Baron Nashor.” It has been clipped by removing the latter part of the word, resulting in the abbreviated form “Nash.” In the game, “Nash” has become widely recognized and used within the game's community. “Nash” refers to a giant neutral monster that is often a game deciding factor. This clipping process allows players to refer to the powerful neutral monster with a shorter and more convenient term, enhancing communication efficiency during matches.

When it comes to “gap,” it is made by fore-clipping the word “gapping.” The original word “gapping” refers to the act of creating a gap or space between two objects or entities. However, in LoL, the term has been metaphorically extended to represent a significant difference or discrepancy in skill or power between players or teams. Therefore, while “gap” does not exhibit a distinct word-forming process, it showcases the creative and adaptive nature of language in assigning new meanings to existing words.

### **3.3.3 Other Word Forming processes & standard words**

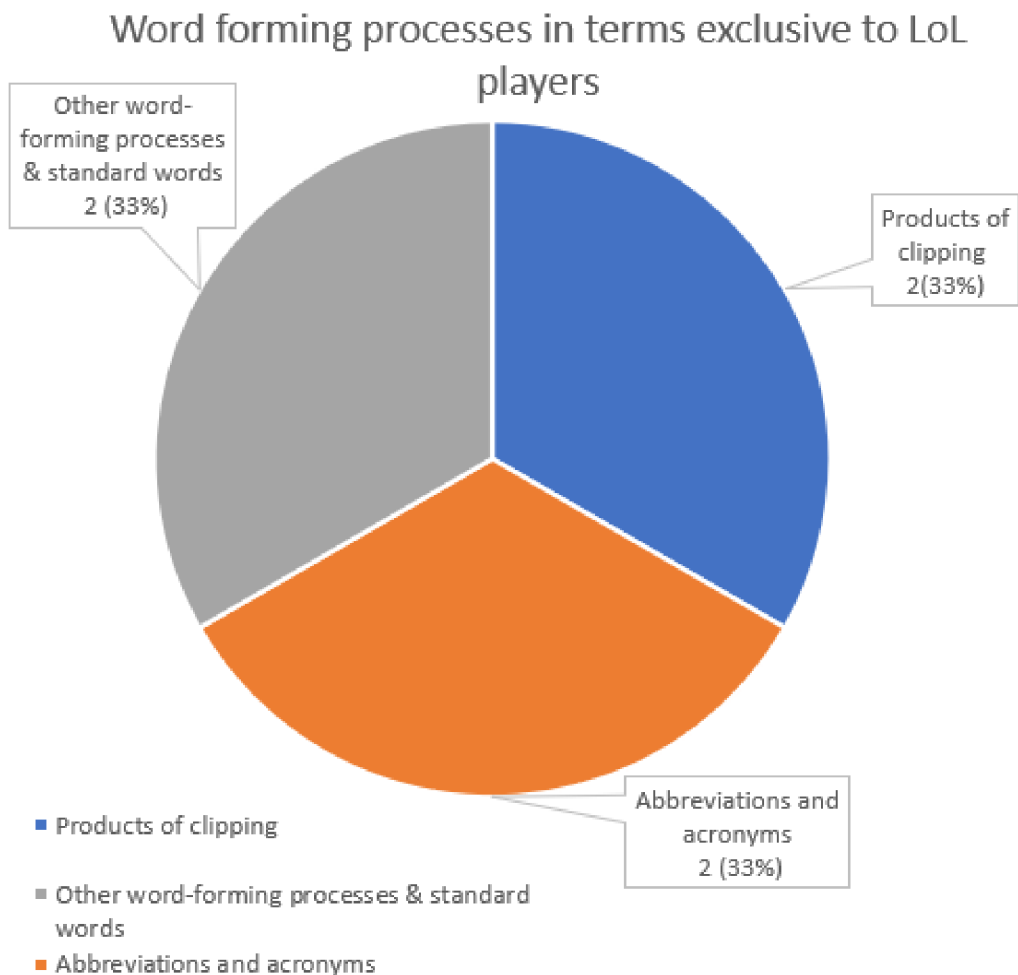
In this category, I will analyse terms that are either result of word-forming processes other than clipping, abbreviations, and acronyms. These word-forming processes are often individually represented, therefore creating a category purely for one term would make this work and the final results in the graphs unsightly and unpleasant to read. Additionally, if any term from the corpus classifies as standard word, I will analyse with it in this category.

The term “flash” carries connotations of speed, agility, and surprise. It draws upon the idea of a sudden burst of light or movement. When it comes to “flash” in terms of linguistics, it can be considered a repurposed word, which means the word has or had a certain meaning, originally “flash” refers to a sudden burst of light or extreme brightness. However, in the specific context of LoL, “flash” is used as a noun to represent an in-game ability that allows champions to quickly move a short distance. Linguistically, this repurposing of the word “flash” involves a semantic shift where the original meaning of the word is extended or adapted to fit the unique game mechanics and actions within LoL. The choice of the word “flash” for this ability may be attributed to its association with quickness, speed, and sudden movement, which aligns with the functionality of the in-game ability. Additionally, the brevity and impact of a flash of light may metaphorically capture the ability to swiftly reposition or engage in fights.

The term “scale” does not fit into a specific word formation process like clipping, blending, or acronym formation. Instead, it can be considered a word that has been repurposed and adapted within the gaming community. “Scale” in LoL means to grow strong, to gain experience and wait the game out. That is because some champions are stronger in later parts of the game, and some are not. From a linguistic point of view, the term “scale” demonstrates a semantic shift, where the original meaning of the word has been extended or adapted to match the particular game mechanics and ideas. In its standard usage, “scale” refers to the act of measuring or weighing, but within the context of the game, it has taken on a metaphorical experience related to the growth and improvement of a champion's strength. This repurposing of words within specific communities or contexts is a common phenomenon in language, where existing words are given new meanings based on shared experiences and activities.

In conclusion, the world of LoL is not only filled with thrilling gameplay and strategic battles but also a rich lexicon of terms exclusive to its passionate community. These terms vary in their word-forming processes, showcasing the creative and adaptive nature of language within the gaming realm. The distinct word-forming processes employed by LoL players, whether it be clipping, abbreviation, or semantic shift, contribute to the formation of a unique and cohesive language that binds players together in their shared experiences on the Summoner's Rift. Ultimately, the lexicon exclusive to LoL players reflect the depth of their engagement with the game and their dedication to developing a specialized vocabulary. The graph below reflects this part in graphic, as it's the only balanced graph among the three groups, with all three categories being equally represented with 33%.

*Graph 1: Word forming processes in terms exclusive to Lol players*





### 3.4 Terms exclusive to players of online games

Terms known by online game players refer to a set of specialized vocabulary and expressions used within the gaming community to communicate effectively about gameplay, strategies, or interactions. These terms often arise from a combination of technical jargon, player-created slang, and shared experience within the gaming culture. They serve as a shorthand for conveying specific concepts, actions, or situations during online gaming, fostering a sense of community, and understanding among players. Defining these terms is nearly impossible, due to the absence of widely recognized dictionaries or glossaries, primarily because the sheer volume of terms is immense and varies to some extent for each game. Secondly, the dynamic and evolving nature of this subculture ensures that new terms continually emerge, often influenced by new technologies, games, or trends. It's important to note that there are many online websites acting as dictionaries, but each cover only a small portion of the terms. To support this statement, I checked Wikipedia, whose glossary has over 160 sources, which proves my point, as it gathers data from enormous number of sources. I would also like to note that among the dozens of glossaries I have worked with, the glossary on Wikipedia is by far the most extensive ("English Internet Slang").

*Table 3: Terms exclusive to online game players*

	Word/abbreviation	Number of entries
1.	gg	4855
2.	gank	3114
3.	ez	2927
4.	ss	2417
5.	wp	2354
6.	cs	1391
7.	ping	1112
8.	ult	989
9.	feed	910
10.	ward	600
11.	jg	366

#### 3.4.1 Abbreviations and acronyms

The most frequently used term from my corpus is "gg." This acronym is a perfect example of initialism, each of the two letters is pronounced on its own. This gaming phenomenon has its roots far back in the early days of online gaming. In gaming community, "gg" has evolved into a powerful and influential term. The term quickly gained traction due to its simplicity and versatility. Its brevity allowed for quick communication at both mid-game and at the end of the

match. Word forming process of “gg” follows a common pattern in gaming language, where abbreviations and acronyms are used to convey meaning efficiently. In this case, “gg” serves as an initialism of the words “good game.” By condensing the phrase into two letters, players can quickly type or say it at the conclusion of a match, saving time and effort. This acronym also enhances the universal appeal of the term, as it can be easily understood across different languages and gaming communities. Furthermore, “gg” has become more than just a phrase. It has become a cultural marker that carries significance within the gaming community. Typing “gg” after a match signifies a level of sportsmanship, acknowledging both the skill of the opponents and the enjoyment derived from the game itself. It serves as a way to gracefully accept victory or defeat while fostering a positive gaming environment. It has also influenced the development of other gaming terms and phrases, further solidifying its role as a fundamental part of gaming language, and apart from that, it is starting to influence standard language.

Secondly, ez. “Ez” is an abbreviation of the word “easy” and has become a distinctive part of gaming culture, particularly in competitive online gaming. The word forming process of “ez” follows a pattern commonly seen in gaming language, where abbreviations or shortened versions of words are used for quick and efficient communication. By abbreviating “easy” to “ez,” players can convey their message swiftly during or after a match. This informal version of easy is likely to originate from the phonetic transcription of easy – [i:zi], it is also worth noting that the abbreviated version exists only in written form. The usage of “ez” in gaming can be seen as a form of taunting or provocation towards opponents, asserting that the victory was effortless or that the opposing team or player lacked skill. It is often employed when one team or player achieves a clear and decisive win over the other. By using “ez,” some players aim to express feelings of frustration or inferiority in their opponents. Some view it as unsportsmanlike and disrespectful, as it is very provocative and considered very toxic. Others argue that it can be seen as a form of banter or playful teasing among friends or within the gaming community. To underline this point even more, it’s worth stating that most gaming platforms and communities have guidelines and rules against toxic behaviour such as ez. The terms origin dates to the early days of competitive gaming, where players often seek to assert dominance or boast about their victories.

Thirdly, “ss.” This term is quite tricky, as it has multiple meanings, yet all of them convey the same - “stay safe.” Other meanings include “enemy missing” or “missing in action.” From a linguistic point of view, if we consider “stay safe” a major definition, this term would be an initialism of the phrase. However, if one considers other definitions, “ss” can be considered simply as an abbreviation for the phrases, as they are too long for the fast-paced game. This term is tightly connected to a “caution” smart ping (see chapter 2.8.1). Even though “ss” is often expressed through the already mentioned smart pings, it has collected a great portion of entries

from my corpus. As for usage within LoL, it is often used by players to alert their teammates that an opponent is absent from their lane and may pose a threat to other teammates.

Acronym “wp” has gained prominence within the gaming lexicon as “well played.” Linguistically, the phrase “well played” is condensed into two letters, both first from their respective words. However, unlike “ss”, “wp” cannot be considered as an initialism as each word is not pronounced individually. The term serves as a commendation for skilful gameplay and is often used to acknowledge an opponent's or even a teammate's exceptional performance. By using “wp,” players can convey respect and appreciation for the quality of gameplay exhibited during a match. It can be a way to recognize and acknowledge the efforts and skills of others, fostering a sense of mutual admiration within the gaming community. The acronym also facilitates cross-language communication within diverse gaming communities, as “wp” is easily understood and recognized across different languages. While “wp” generally carries a positive connotation, it is essential to consider the context and tone in which it is used. It is intended as a genuine expression of admiration and sportsmanship, but it is important to avoid using it sarcastically, as this can undermine its intended meaning.

Next is “cs,” an initialism of the phrase “creep score.” This abbreviation streamlines communication during gameplay by condensing the phrase “creep score” into the two-letter “cs.” Creep Score indicates the number of minions or neutral monsters a player has successfully killed or “last hit” to gain gold and experience. It represents another example of word formation through abbreviation in LoL. By using “cs,” players can quickly convey information about their farming progress and resource accumulation. Similar to other abbreviations and acronyms in the game, “cs” has become a widely recognized term within the game’s community. It reflects the member's ability to develop a specialized vocabulary that efficiently captures important game elements.

Lastly it is “jg,” an abbreviation for jungler or jungle in general. In the game, “jg” represents an abbreviation that showcases the word-forming process of condensing a term for concise communication. Jungle or jungler refers to the role and position of a player who navigates the jungle area of the map, farming neutral monsters and providing support to the team. The abbreviation “jg” allows players to quickly refer to the jungle role without the need for typing out the full word. This abbreviation has become widely adopted and recognized within the LoL community and other MOBA games. By using “jg,” players can quickly coordinate strategies, call for assistance, or discuss the jungle-related aspects of the game or quite often flame the player that is in the mentioned role of jungle.

### **3.4.2 Products of clipping**

First product of clipping in this category is “ult”. This term underwent a word-forming process known as clipping. Clipping involves shortening a word by removing one or more syllables or sounds. In this case “-imate” is clipped from the original term “ultimate” into a shorter and easier to use term “ult.” In various games, “ult” refers to a character's most powerful and game-changing ability. It is a widely recognized abbreviation used by players to refer to these impactful skills quickly and conveniently during gameplay. The word formation process of “ult” through clipping reflects the gaming community's inclination towards abbreviation and efficiency in communication. The term “ult” is not exclusive to LoL and is also commonly used in other games with similar mechanics, where it refers to a character's ultimate ability or special move that can turn the tide of battles and have a significant impact on the game.

Second product of clipping is “feed.” Same as above, this term has undergone a word-forming process known as clipping. In the case of “feed,” it is a clipped form of the word “feeding.” The word “feeding” in gaming contexts originally referred to providing sustenance or resources to someone or something. However, in the specific context of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games, the term “feeding” took on a new meaning. It became associated with players repeatedly dying to their opponents, which inadvertently grants them experience points and gold. This behaviour is considered detrimental to the player's team, as it allows the enemy team to grow stronger and gain an advantage. It has become a commonly used term within the LoL player base to discuss and criticize players who exhibit this behaviour. Through the process of clipping, the term “feed” has been adapted and repurposed to fit the specific gaming context. It highlights the linguistic creativity and flexibility of the gaming community in developing concise and easily recognizable vocabulary to describe common actions and strategies within the game.

### **3.4.3 Other word forming processes & standard words**

As mentioned above, terms in this category do not fit any of the already discussed categories, such as clipping or abbreviations and acronyms. This concrete category deals with terms that fail to align with the two previous categories, due to their word-forming process being either semantic shift or being MOBA jargon. This category is the most diverse, as each term is completely different and so is its word-forming process.

First in this category is the term “gank.” Whilst the origin of the term “gank” in LoL is not definitively known, it is alleged to have derived from the word “gang up on a person.” The term “gank” has grown into an exemplary jargon in the gaming community and is specifically used to describe the act of coordinating an ambush or surprise attack on an enemy player or a

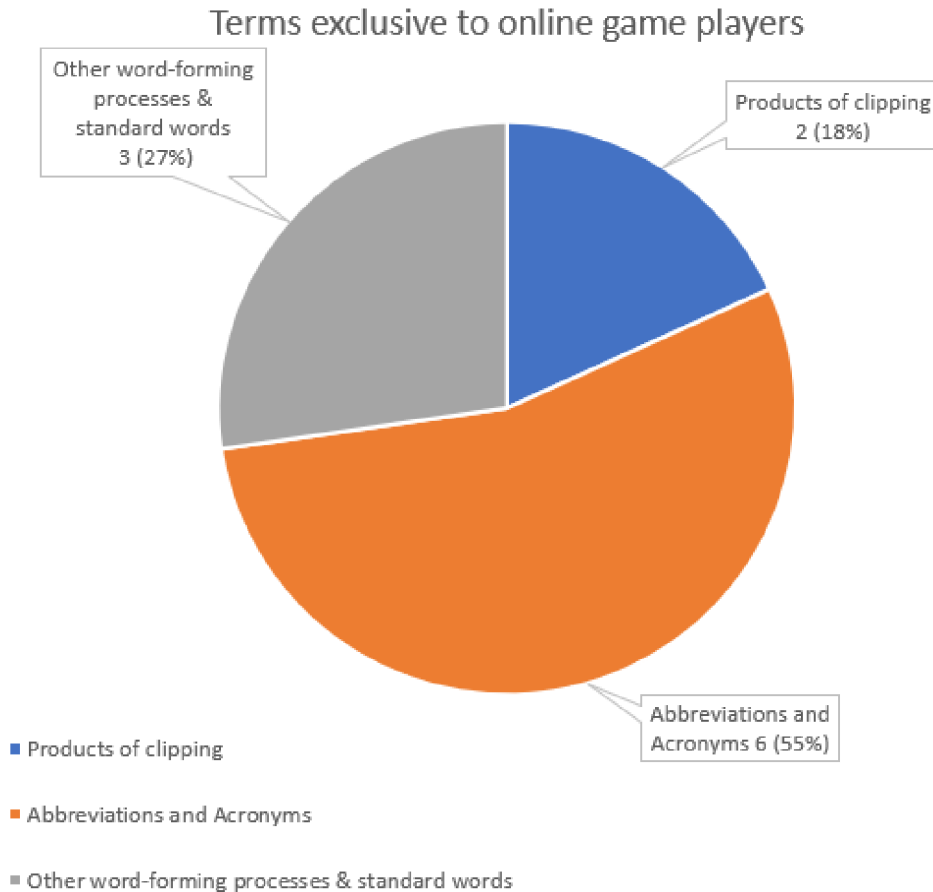
group, usually in their lane or jungle. “Gank” involves one or more players coordinating their efforts to catch the opponent off-guard and secure a kill. Unlike other word-forming processes, such as abbreviation or clipping, “gank” does not involve a specific linguistic mechanism. Instead, it has evolved as a unique term within the gaming lexicon. The term “gank” in gaming is an example of the way gaming communities can create their exclusive jargon to describe actions or techniques in the game. The term is often used to indicate a strategic action that takes advantage of the element of surprise and teamwork.

Second representative in this category is “ping”, a term that is widely recognized across multiple genres of online games. Therefore, “ping” in the context of communication within online games refers to the in-game feature that allows players to issue quick commands or notifications to their teammates by clicking on the game map. For example, players can ping a specific location on the map to indicate danger, request assistance, or communicate objectives. The word forming process of “ping,” as a communication tool in various online games can be described as a form of onomatopoeia. In this case, “ping” is a sharp sound that grabs attention. In online gaming industry, “ping” may refer to a time it takes for a data packet to travel from user’s computer or console to the game server. Both terms are written identically, yet each stand for something completely different.

Third term “ward,” refers to a game mechanic where players can place little totems known as wards on the map to gain vision on for a certain amount of time, usually for 3 minutes and during that, they can gather intel about the enemy team's positions. Linguistically, the term “ward” does not involve any specific word-forming process or origin. It is a word that is usually used in gaming contexts, mainly within strategy and multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genres. The concept of wards and their function as vision-providing objects have become integral to the gameplay of MOBA games, with players using wards strategically to gain an advantage in map control and objective control. Ward can be considered as a MOBA jargon, whilst it may not involve a particular word-forming process, it is a term that holds an exclusive meaning within the genre.

The following graph shows that among terms exclusive to online game players, abbreviations and acronyms are by far the most represented with stunning 55%. Next are other word forming processes & standard words with 27%. Lastly, products of clipping consist only of 18%. Additionally, its key to consider initialisms are subcategory of acronyms.

Graph 2: Word forming processes in terms exclusive to players of online games



### 3.5 Terms considered common knowledge

The remaining terms do fail to align with neither of the two above mentioned categories of exclusivity, as they are considered common knowledge. Commonly known terms in this case are those, which are regularly used within informal conversation, internet, and online games. All seven abbreviations on the list need no introduction, as all of them or their variations can be found in nearly any online dictionary, or list of terms. For example, Rice University’s website *rice.edu* contains a marvellous dictionary of all the terms I will analyse in this part (“Internet Slang”). The single full word on this list, “fuck,” is a phenomenon on its own. In the context of LoL, many terms that are used on daily basis occur. They are mostly abbreviations or acronyms from real life that have become a part of the game’s communication tools. Terms and expressions like “wtf” (what the fuck), “lol” (laugh out loud) and “idk” (I don’t know) have seamlessly integrated into

the virtual battlefield. These familiar expressions, primarily used in real-life conversations and online interactions, now serve as shorthand to convey emotions, reactions, and sentiments within the game. Their widespread usage reflects the similarity of gaming culture and everyday language, bridging the gap between the virtual and real world and establishing a shared understanding among players. They show how language can change and be flexible in our digital era. In the table below are eight terms that will be explained and analysed in this part.

*Table 4: Terms considered common knowledge*

	Word/abbreviation	Number of entries
1.	fuck	4532
2.	wtf	3453
3.	lol	2950
4.	omg	2569
5.	ffs	1236
6.	gj	652
7.	stfu	584
8.	idk	214

### 3.5.1 Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms borrowed from real-life conversations have seamlessly integrated themselves into the game's vibrant language, they also make up most of this group. Starting with the most popular item on the list in this category of most frequent terms is “wtf”.

The infamous “wtf” stands for “what the fuck,” and is formed by taking the initial letters of each word from the phrase, namely “w,” “t,” and “f.” However, there are two ways of saying “wtf.” Firstly, many users completely ignore the spelling part, as pronouncing the letter “W” is quite awkward, therefore in spoken form, no spelling is included, just the simple phrase “what-the-fuck.” Secondly, “wtf” can be rarely spelled as “double-u-tee-ef,” which is as stated before objectively awkward and unpractical. In conclusion, “wtf” can be considered both acronym and initialism, however the acronym version is much more common. This condensed term is less vulgar since the word “fuck” is hidden and not pronounced. According to *dictionary.com*, “wtf” is an informal expression widely used to convey a spectrum of emotions, including surprise, disbelief, or frustration (“Wtf”). In the immersive world of LoL, players commonly use “wtf” to react swiftly to unexpected situations that arise during gameplay. Whether it's witnessing an extraordinary play or encountering a strange game mechanic, this abbreviation serves as method to express a wide range of emotions, from astonishment to frustration. Within the fast-paced and aggressive environment of the game, “wtf” turns into a compact and impactful device for capturing the intensity and complexity of the gaming experience.

The acronym “lol,” a phenomenon that stands for “laugh out loud,” is a widely recognized slang term that has transcended the limits of electronic communication. The word-forming process of “lol” is quite tricky, as this term can be considered both acronym and initialism (see chapter 2.6.1). The acronym itself consists only of the first letter of each word in the phrase “laugh out loud,” therefore only pronunciation differs. Despite its complicated categorization, it is key to state that in LoL, the vast majority of communication is in written form, therefore pronunciation is irrelevant. While it has lost some of its authentic meaning through the years, “lol” remains one of the most common and universal terms utilized in online conversations and social media. The acronym can be used both as an interjection and a verb. Although it once referred to audible laughter, its usage has evolved to primarily indicate a smile or slight amusement. While some individuals emphasize its impact by writing it in all capital letters, there are no strict rules for capitalization in informal communication. Interestingly, “lol” has even made its way into spoken language, creating a paradoxical situation where one claims to be laughing out loud without doing so. Despite its semantic shift, “lol” continues to be a pervasive and versatile term, conveying positive emotions and humour in the digital age.

Closely tied behind lol is “omg,” an initialism of “oh my god.” This acronym is an extensively used slang term that has turned out to be deeply embedded in both online and offline communication. It serves as an expression of excitement, astonishment, or disbelief. The initialism is shaped by taking the initial letters of every word and combining them into a condensed expression, where each word is pronounced separately. This expression has gained significant popularity and has become an integral part of everyday conversations, transcending its origins in electronic communication. Its usage extends beyond written text and has found its way into spoken language as well. As a testament to its cultural impact, “omg” has even been added to dictionaries, solidifying its status as a commonly recognized term. Its widespread usage and recognition highlight its influence on contemporary language and its ability to reflect the evolving nature of communication in the digital age. Whether used sincerely or ironically, “omg” continues to be a versatile expression that effectively conveys a range of emotions in various contexts.

Following the frustrating context, “ffs” is next one on the list. This term is an initialism for “for fuck's sake,” and is a common slang term used to express frustration, annoyance, or exasperation. It is formed by taking the initial letters of each word and combining them to make a shorter expression. It serves as a straightforward way to show a sense of anger or disbelief. Whether used humorously or with genuine frustration, “ffs” allows individuals to express their emotions succinctly and assertively. The abbreviation has become ingrained in contemporary slang and showcases the adaptability of language in capturing and conveying a range of emotions in our everyday interactions. It has become a part of the gaming jargon within the gaming



community, enabling players to express their emotions and frustrations in a concise and immediate manner.

As the last two entries express mostly frustration, “gj” is the exact opposite, it is an acronym commonly used to convey the phrase “good job.” This expression is an acronym, as it is composed of initial letters of each word from the original phrase, however it cannot be considered an initialism as its letters are not pronounced separately. The word forming process simplifies the original phrase while retaining its positive meaning. Furthermore, it is important to highlight, that this particular acronym rarely appears in spoken form, suggesting that the original, longer phrase “good job” is used. Essentially, this term is mainly used in a written form. Nowadays “gj” has breached the gates of everyday language, obviously it is still more popular on the internet, but it has found its way to real life conversations, it is often used informally as a shorthand way to express appreciation or congratulate someone for their achievements or efforts. In LoL, “gj” is frequently used by players to recognize and commend their teammates for making successful plays, demonstrating skill, or contributing to the team's success.

Next abbreviation is “stfu,” which by far the most offensive and straight forward on the list. This acronym is used as a shortening for “shut the fuck up.” The most vulgar entry from the list follows the same word-forming process as the previous “gj,” it is an acronym that consists of initial letters from each word of the phrase. These two mentioned terms have more in common, just as “gj,” this acronym is rarely found in spoken form. The word forming process allows for a straightforward and assertive way to convey a strong message of silencing someone. In everyday conversations, “stfu” is an informal and often blunt expression used to command someone to stop talking or to cease their speech. It is primarily used in situations where there is frustration, annoyance, or a desire for someone to be quiet.

Last from this group is “idk,” one of the most used terms in informal language and in online gaming. It is an acronym, specifically an initialism formed by taking the initial letters of each word. It stands for “I don't know” and is pronounced letter by letter. When used in conversations or online messaging, “idk” is commonly employed as a quick and informal way to express uncertainty or lack of knowledge about a particular topic. It has become prevalent in both real-life and digital communication.

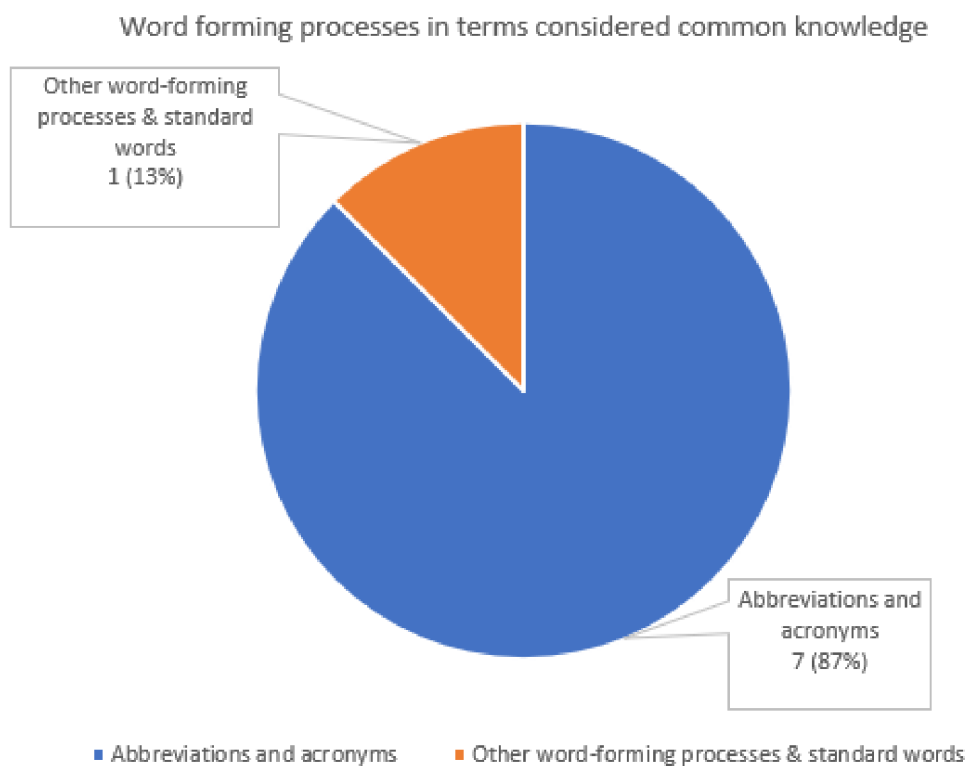
### **3.5.2 Other word forming processes & standard words**

As mentioned before, this category is supposed to deal with other word forming processes, however, the only representative is a standard word “fuck.” This vulgar term has a complex and debated origin, making its precise etymology difficult to trace. It is believed to have derived from various Germanic and Scandinavian languages. Over time, “fuck” gradually entered

the English language and gained its explicit and vulgar connotation. As for the word forming process, “fuck” does not follow a specific acronym or abbreviation pattern. It is a monosyllabic word that has remained largely unchanged throughout its history. However, it is worth noting that the diverse variations and expressions of “fuck”, such as “fucking” or “motherfucker,” showcase some word forming processes like suffixation or compounding, where additional elements are combined with the base word to create new forms and intensify its meaning.

The graph on the next page shows an extreme dominance, as only one out of eight terms was formed by other word formatting process than abbreviation or acronym. Also, this graph unlike the first two doesn't include products of clipping.

*Graph 3: Word forming processes in common knowledge terms*



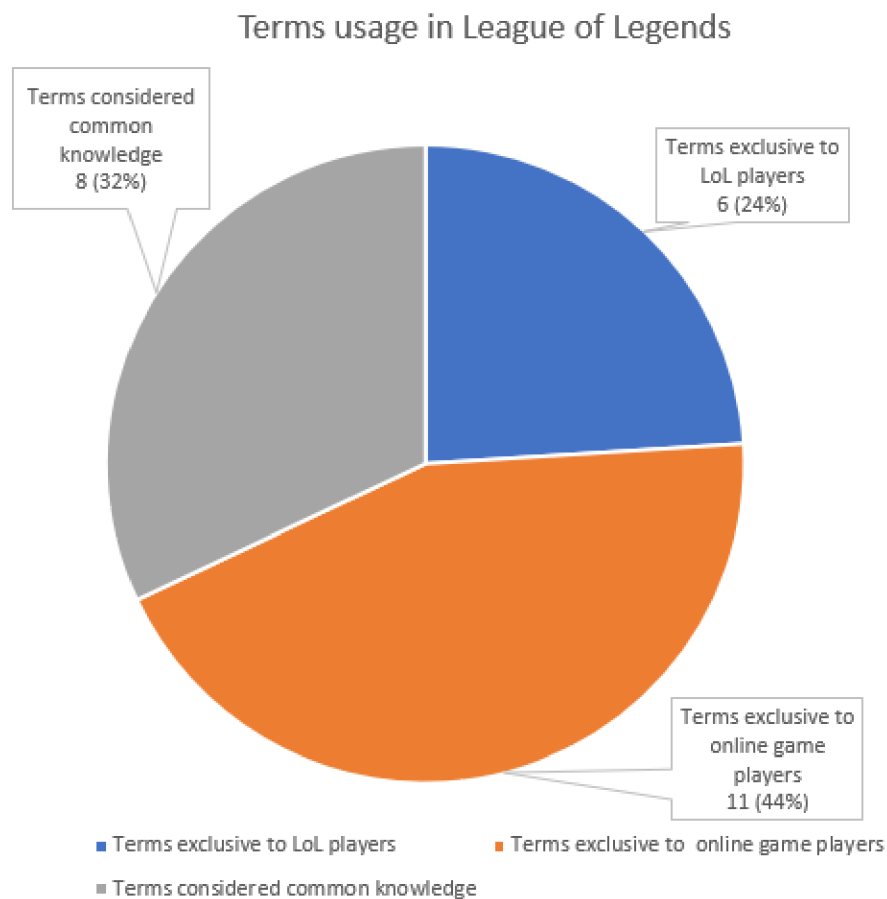
### **3.6 Results of the research**

By carefully curating the corpus through the inflection filtering function and considering the impact of abbreviations, I was able to generate valuable insights into the linguistic landscape of the game. Additionally, to further refine my analysis, I selected the twenty-five most frequently used words from the filtered corpus. These words were chosen based on their high frequency and relevance within LoL chat. By arranging them in descending order, which was made in Microsoft Excel, I could identify the most prevalent and impactful terms used in the community, which meant I was able to identify patterns of word creation, such as clipping, or borrowing from other languages, shedding light on the creative linguistic strategies utilized by the player base. This

selection of key words allowed me to focus on the core vocabulary that drives communication and reflects the unique language dynamics of LoL. Analysing the frequency and order of these words provided valuable insights into the prevalent themes, popular expressions, and linguistic patterns that shape interactions within the game.

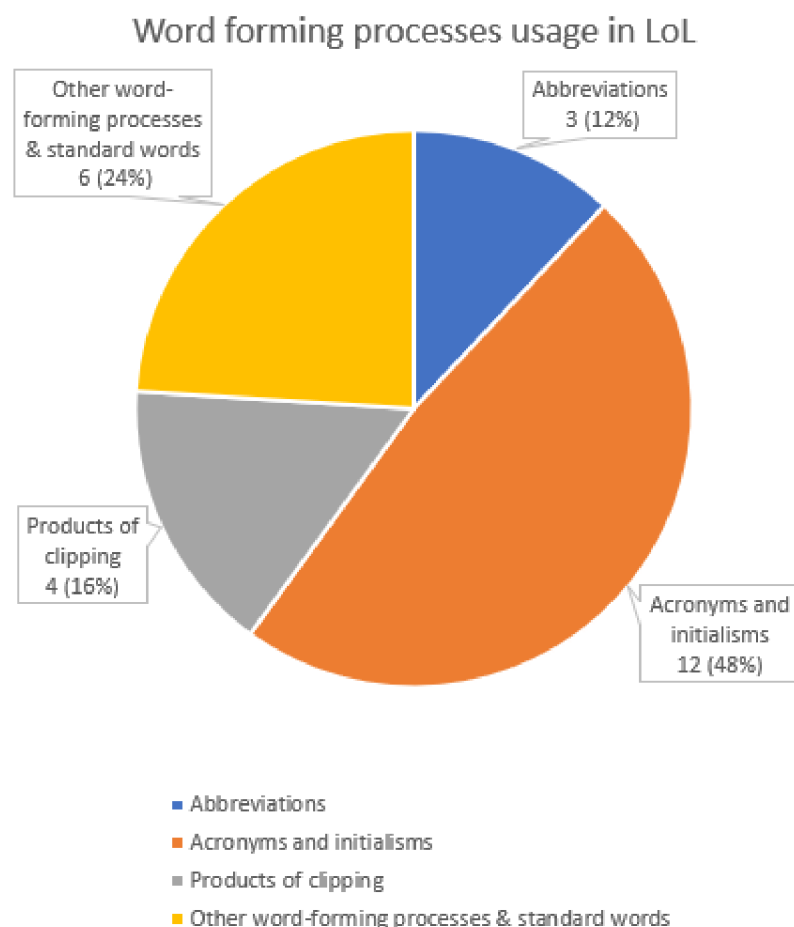
Although it is clear from the length of the text that expression exclusive to online game players are the most numerous, I aim to reinforce my results through graphs. The following graph shows how exclusive the language in LoL is. As we can see, the results are dominated by terms known by majority of online game players. This category has 11 entries out of the 25, so one can say that nearly a half of the terms is commonly known among online players. Followed by commonly known terms with 8 entries, which is a result I expected. On the other hand, I did not expect LoL exclusive terms to be the category with the fewest expressions, with only 6. That would mean starting players have a chance to understand most parts of communication, but there will be parts where they will need to learn the jargon first. Such expressions consists mostly of terms that are associated with in-game situations or emotions, which will not help new players in any way. As mentioned already, nearly a half of the list are terms exclusive to online game players, which are terms such as “gg” or “ez.” These terms are commonly found in all online games, and they are not hard to understand even if someone does not know them.

*Graph 4: Terms usage in LoL*



The following graph describes the word forming processes that were used for the 25 most frequently used terms in LoL. For clarification, this graph showcasing the word-forming processes from my corpus consists of 4 parts, unlike other graphs about word-forming processes in practical part of this thesis, which have only 3 categories. The reasoning behind that is simple, it is the sheer number of initialisms included under the category of acronyms, which would otherwise be hidden behind the mentioned acronyms. This way, the final results show more clarity. The dominant part of the graph are acronyms and initialisms, consisting of nearly a half of the corpus with 12 terms, which is no surprise due to the games fast-paced style, where players need to communicate as fast as possible. Category of Other word forming processes & standard words contribute to nearly a quarter of the corpus with 6 entries. These include the creation of new words through processes such as semantic shift in “flash.” Products of clipping make up 16% of the word forming processes used with just 4 terms. Clipping involves shortening existing words, resulting in more time efficient terminology within the gaming context. Lastly, abbreviations with only 3 entries, which may be surprising to some, however, it is important to realize that most of the acronyms are employed as a shortened version of a phrase, which are prevalent in LoL.

*Graph 5: Word forming processes usage in LoL*



#### **4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research on lexical exclusivity in LoL has provided insightful findings regarding the prevalence of exclusive terms within the game. Notably, the analysis of the 25 most frequently used terms reveals a prominent dominance of acronyms, and initialism respectively. Followed by abbreviations and clippings, confirming a trend that was not surprising. As a researcher, while I was well-versed in the terms used within the game, I was genuinely surprised by the frequency with which some of these terms were employed. The extent to which certain terms emerged as recurring elements in player communication highlighted the deep-rooted nature of these linguistic shortcuts within the community. The abundance of abbreviations, acronyms, and clippings demonstrates the collective knowledge and shared understanding among players. It underscores the importance of efficient communication and the development of a common language that facilitates effective teamwork and strategic gameplay. Even though the findings of this research showed that LoL exclusive terms are the least numerous category, its significance on understanding the game is still undeniable. Understanding the extent of their usage can provide valuable insights into the intricacies of player communication and the shared gaming experience. In conclusion, the research confirms the significant role played by abbreviations, acronyms, and clippings as the primary forms of lexical exclusivity in LoL. It also highlights the surprising frequency with which these terms are used, even for those who are already familiar with them. This study reinforces the understanding that the dominance of these language forms is a natural consequence of the game's unique communication requirements, while also shedding light on the dynamic interplay between language, gaming culture, and effective communication strategies in this popular online game.

This bachelor thesis provided insight into the language used in LoL and showed the trend in the English language to shorten words. This trend is documented by analysing the most frequent expressions appearing in player communication in the game. For the twenty-five most frequent expressions, the word-forming process by which they were created was given, their meaning, use and origin explained. In the end, this ranking of the most common expressions can also function as a dictionary or an idea of what to expect for players starting with the game.

## 5 Summary

This bachelor thesis deals with lexical exclusivity in the online game LoL. The thesis begins with an introduction to semantics and stylistics, followed by their comparison. The theoretical part has two pillars, which are crucial for this thesis – slang and word-forming processes. The chapter about slang focuses on internet slang, misspellings or leetspeak. Furthermore, the goal of that chapter is to state criteria for defining slang and its categories. The following chapter dealing with word-forming processes lays emphasis on abbreviations, acronyms, and semantic shift, which are crucial topics for practical part. The theoretical part ends with an examination of the phenomenon in-groups and out-groups, their respective characteristics and lastly, a comparison of slang and jargon. The goal of the practical part is to highlight the language used in LoL, mainly its exclusivity. Utilizing #LancsBox software, I was able to process data collected from the chat rooms and construct a corpus consisting of 25 most frequently used terms within the game. These terms are divided in three categories, such as terms exclusive to LoL players, terms exclusive to online game players and lastly, terms considered common knowledge. Furthermore, each of the category contains criteria for the categorization, followed by an analysis of each term. Additionally, each category includes a graph visualizing frequency of word-forming processes. The results are presented in two graphs, one describing the exclusivity, and the other highlighting the word-forming processes used. This thesis addresses the challenges of language and its evolution, especially on the internet. The research proved that language in LoL is exclusive only partially. Terms exclusive to online game players dominate the list of most frequently used terms. Terms considered common knowledge comprise a respectable third of the corpus. Lastly, the category for exclusive terms in LoL is the least represented, with only a quarter of the whole corpus.

## 6 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá lexikální exkluzivitou v online hře LoL. Práce začíná v teoretické části úvodem do sémantiky, porovnáním se stylistikou a stylistickou analýzou. Teoretická část má dvě stěžejní části, které jsou pro zbytek práce klíčové, tyto části jsou slang a jeho kategorie, a slovtvorné procesy, jako jsou akronyma či abreviace. Kapitola o slangu se zaměřuje primárně na internetový slang, ale také na překlapy, či leetspeak. K cílům této kapitoly bezpochybně patří definování slangu a jeho kategorií. Následuje finální kapitola teoretické části, ta pojednává o in-groups a out-groups, fenoménu, který se zabývá inkluzí a exkluzí členů ze skupin, jejich charakteristikám, a nakonec srovnáním slangu a jargonu. Následuje velmi stručné vysvětlení principu samotné hry a komunikace která v ní probíhá. Praktická část si klade za úkol poukázat na jazyk používaný ve hře LoL, jeho exkluzivitu a slovtvorné procesy. Pomocí programu #LancsBox, jsem sestavil korpus 25 nejpoužívanějších slov z chatových místností

v LoL. Výrazy z tohoto korpusu jsou rozděleny do tří kategorií, výrazy exkluzivní pro hráče LoL, výrazy exkluzivní pro hráče online her, a výrazy které jsou běžně známé většinové populaci. Každá z těchto částí obsahuje kromě analýzy všech slov také informace o jejich slovtvorném procesu, včetně grafu pro lepší vizualizaci. Finální výsledky jsou prezentovány ve dvou grafech, jeden znázorňuje exkluzivitu a její tři kategorie, a druhý znázorňující četnost jednotlivých slovtvorných procesů. Tato práce se zabývá náročností jazyka a jeho neustálého vývoje, zejména na internetu. Výzkum prokázal že jazyk ve hře LoL je jen z části exkluzivní, jeho hlavní část tvoří výrazy, které jsou známé majoritní části hráčů online her, následují výrazy běžně známé a nejméně početná je kategorie termínů čistě exkluzivních pro hráče LoL.

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