For Victory: Skill Naming in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*

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Abstract

This study focuses on how the skill naming in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*. The skill naming in the two skill-dependent video games assists in shaping players' experience by the relation of skill name and its naming ideas. Therefore, these video games could create such an immersion as they have mythopoesis or their world. The qualitative method was employed in this study. Textual, visual, and functional representations of skills were analyzed. The data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using four analytical phases, namely domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme analysis. From this study, four types of skill names are found in each game: real and indexical, real and non-indexical, associative and indexical, and associative and non-indexical. Thus, the skill naming formulation in both games is varied. The findings imply that this study could be employed as a reference for further studies as it wields relevant theories to signify skill naming in other literary works. In practical use, this study could be employed by game developers to compose skill names whether the skills would be named based on their visual or not, and the owner's story or associative sense.

Keywords: skill naming, video games, mobile legends: bang bang, honor of kings

For Victory: Penamaan Skill dalam *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* dan *Honor of Kings*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada cara penamaan skill dalam *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* dan *Honor of Kings*. Penamaan skill dalam dua gim yang bergantung pada skill ini membantu membentuk pengalaman pemain melalui hubungan antara nama skill dan ide penamaannya. Oleh karena itu, gim ini dapat menciptakan imersi yang mendalam karena memiliki *mythopoesis* atau dunia mereka sendiri. Metode kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Representasi keterampilan yang mencakup aspek tekstual, visual, dan fungsional dianalisis. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan empat tahap analisis, yaitu analisis domain, taksonomi, komponensial, dan tema kultural. Dari penelitian ini, ditemukan empat jenis nama keterampilan dalam setiap permainan: nyata dan indeksikal, nyata dan non-indeksikal, asosiatif dan indeksikal, serta asosiatif dan non-indeksikal. Oleh karena itu, formulasi penamaan keterampilan dalam kedua permainan tersebut bervariasi. Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa penelitian ini dapat digunakan sebagai referensi untuk penelitian lebih lanjut, karena menggunakan teori-teori relevan untuk menjelaskan penamaan keterampilan dalam karya sastra lainnya. Dalam penerapan praktis, penelitian ini dapat digunakan oleh pengembang permainan untuk merancang nama keterampilan, baik berdasarkan visualnya maupun cerita pemiliknya atau makna asosiatifnya.

Kata kunci: penamaan skill, gim, mobile legends: bang bang, honor of kings

INTRODUCTION

Skill naming, often perceived as a minor design choice, is in fact a critical component in Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games because it shapes players' understanding of skills and their owners. From an onomastic perspective, naming is inseparable from the study of proper names and their origins (Topolovec, 2012). Names function not merely as labels but as cognitive and communicative tools that help identify and conceptualize entities (Algeo & Algeo, 2000). Kripke (1980) further emphasizes that naming is not limited to descriptive uniqueness but also concerns the correct and consistent identification of an entity. In video games such as *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*, skill naming serves to convey a narrative identity, reinforcing the thematic background and role of the skill owner.

In MOBA games, skills refer to the abilities or actions performed by heroes, and their creation requires careful consideration of both mechanics and aesthetics. Bevz (2023) argues that effective skill design must balance mechanical functionality with aesthetic appeal to preserve a hero's thematic identity. Skills are commonly classified into passive, offensive, defensive, and utility categories, a structure that ensures balanced gameplay (Palm & Noren, 2015). However, beyond mechanical balance, the naming of these skills plays a significant role in shaping player experience. Through narratives and mechanics, players are guided toward the intended emotional and strategic engagement with the game world (Daneels et al., 2021). Thus, skill names are designed to signal not only functional attributes but also narrative meaning.

This narrative and mechanical signaling is reinforced through multiple semiotic dimensions. Pratt (2009) pictorial dimension highlights how names acquire narrative context through visualization. Sartika et al. (2023) expand this view by emphasizing the alignment between narrative, mechanics, visual, and audial elements in skill naming. This concept, termed indexical alignment, is adopted from Peirce's theory of signs (Smith, 2016) and refers to the synchronization of these elements in constructing meaningful skill names. Visual elements play a crucial role in conveying what a skill does, allowing players to interpret mechanics intuitively and formulate strategies accordingly (Sartika et al., 2023). This relationship between visuals and mechanics is further conceptualized as ludic visual, where game mechanics are communicated through visual representation to support interactive gameplay (Laakso, 2019).

Figure 1. *Thorned Rose* by Lancelot

An illustrative example is Lancelot's skill Thorned Rose in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. Narratively, the name reflects Lancelot's identity as a Romantic Knight. Mechanically, the skill performs rapid, triangular rapier strikes, which are visually depicted as a triangular pattern of attacks. This visual-mechanical correspondence

enables players to strategize effectively, such as positioning enemies within the triangular area to maximize damage. Audial elements further enhance immersion; during the execution of Thorned Rose, Lancelot accompanies the skill with a vocal expression, reinforcing the skill's intensity and character identity. Audial cues, whether in the form of skill name quotations, expressive shouting, or emotive sounds, contribute to defining both the skill and its owner (Sartika et al., 2023).

Previous studies have examined around skill naming, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, and *Honor of Kings*, namely indexical alignment in fictional techniques across media that is studied by Sartika et al. (2023), mythological adaptations of heroes in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* (Hidayaturrohim, 2021), the reconstruction of historical and cultural narratives in *Honor of Kings* (Yao & Chen, 2022), the study of video game music and cultural dissemination of *Honor of Kings (HoK)* video game (Li & Song, 2023), the studies of metaphor used in *Mobile Legends* game character's utterances (Fitriana & Rois, 2023), the sociolinguistic analysis of the meaning of jargon in the *Mobile Legend* Online Game(Novrianti, Lestari, Mahdiansyah, & Sembiring, 2023), the morpho-semantic analysis of *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* (MLBB) jargon and its educational implications (Loquellano & Semblante, 2025). However, none of the existing studies specifically investigate the naming of in-game skills in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*. Prior studies have predominantly focused on heroes, narratives, music, dialogue, or general jargon, thus overlooking skills as named actions that players repeatedly interact with during gameplay. This omission is significant because skill names function as crucial mediators between narrative identity, game mechanics, visual representation that affecting players' decision-making and immersive experience. Addressing this gap, the this study investigates how skills are named in these two MOBA games by applying the framework of indexical alignment, focusing on how narratives, mechanics, visuals, and audial elements collectively construct meaningful and functional skill names by answering this research question: How are skills named in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*?

METHOD

The research design employed in this study is qualitative. The data were collected from 2 mobile MOBA games played by the group members: *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*. The data collected were in textual, visual, and operative forms. Textual data were obtained from the skill names of heroes in the two

games. Meanwhile, the visual data were acquired through screen capturing the skills while their owner cast them. Lastly, the operative data were attained from the root function of the skill, such as offensive, defensive, and utility skills. Observing these data allows the skill names to be analyzed to unfold the ideas behind the names.

The analysis technique by Spradley (1980) was applied to analyze the collected data. Four phases were taken namely domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme. In the first phase, domain analysis, the data found are classified by the roles of skill owners in the games, namely assassin, fighter, mage, support, tank, and marksman. In the next phase, taxonomy analysis, the data were classified into real, associative, or real-associative skills by employing the theory by Purnomo & Purnama (2013) and the classified data were analyzed by utilizing the jutsuonym theory by Sartika et al. (2023) to reveal the indexical relationship between the skill name and its owner's background story.

After the classification was done, componential analysis was used. Here the domain and taxonomy analysis findings were put in a table to examine the skill naming pattern. This relationship was expected to reveal the tendency of each hero class naming pattern from the two different MOBA games. In the last phase, cultural theme analysis, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings* have mythopoesis, their world, that can be seen in heroes' lore. Therefore, researchers assume that the skill naming in these two MOBA games is linked to their background stories to strengthen their lore.

Table 1. *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* Componential Table

Hero Classes	Real		Associative		Real-Associative	
	Indexical	Non-Indexical	Indexical	Non-Indexical	Indexical	Non-Indexical
Assassin	∨					
Fighter						
Mage						
Support						
Tank						
Marksman						

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis, categorized into four primary types of skill naming identified in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings*: real-indexical, real-non-indexical, associative-indexical, and associative-non-indexical. By synthesizing Purnomo & Purnama (2013) distinction between real and associative names with Sartika et al. (2023) framework of indexicality, the findings reveal a sophisticated semiotic negotiation between a hero's narrative identity and the game's mechanical utility. Shown below is the data table of this research:

Table 3. Data Table

Games	Hero Classes	Real		Associative		Real-Associative	
		Indexical	Non-Indexical	Indexical	Non-Indexical	Indexical	Non-Indexical
Mobile Legends : Bang Bang	Assasin	2	2	4	1		
	Fighter	3	6	2	1		
	Mage	4	1	3	1		
	Support	3	3	4	2		
	Tank	1	4	2	2		
	Marksman	1	5	1	2		
Honor of Kings	Assasin	2	2	4	1		
	Fighter	3	6	2	1		
	Mage	5	1	3	-		
	Support	6	2	3	1		
	Tank	2	5	1	1		
	Marksman	1	6	1	1		

The findings show that both *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings* have 4 types of skill naming: real and indexical, real and non-indexical, associative and indexical, and associative and non-indexical. Based on the analysis of 60 skills from 20 heroes in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, the real and non-indexical category appears most frequently, with 21 skills, while in *Honor of Kings*, with the same amount of skill name examined, real and non-indexical also appears to be the most dominant type with 22 skills. This demonstrates that while narrative elements (indexicality) are present, they are secondary to the functional requirement of visual-mechanical clarity in fast-paced competitive MOBA gameplay. From the overall

examined data, researchers took several data as an example of explanation. The data assigned is a representation of the four categories found in each game.

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Real and Indexical

Skill name is crucial in video games. Skills can named after the alignment with their visualization. Purnomo & Purnama (2013) categorizes this skill into skills with real meaning. This type of skill helps the players pre-comprehend what the skill is all about by reading its name. Alongside visualization-based naming, a skill is occasionally named after its owner's narrative to strengthen a game's lore or we call it indexical name which was proposed by Sartika et al. (2023). The combination of those naming practices is found in Rafaela of *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang's* second skill, *Holy Healing*. The datum presented above is an example of real and indexical type of skill name.

Figure 2. *Holy Healing* by Rafaela

Visually, Rafaela calls upon holy lights which heals herself and nearby allied heroes. This concordance between skill name and visualization helps players to pre-comprehend the skill and create a strategy based on the skill visualization. In the narrative case, this skill alludes to Rafaela as an archangel and light angel. This harmony of skill name and its owner's narrative helps to strengthen the game's lore which generates better immersion.

Real and Non-Indexical

Real, implied by Purnomo & Purnama (2013), and non-indexical, categorized by Sartika et al. (2023), refers to the concordance of skill name only with visualization and it has nothing to do with the hero's narrative. This type of skill naming occurs when the skill visualization and function are the main focus. One of the examples is *Glorious Pathway* by Hylos of *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*.

Figure 3. *Glorious Pathway* by Hylos

By looking at the skill visual above, Hylos creates a huge pathway that slows down any foes, heals, and buffs himself. With this concordance of the skill name and its visualization, the players get what they read on the skill name, a pathway. Meanwhile, the skill does not refer to Hylos' narrative which he is a centaur and grand warden. This mismatch between the skill name and the hero's narrative is caused by the lesser importance of the hero's narrative to be adopted as a name in a certain skill.

Associative and Indexical

Aside from the real name, Purnomo & Purnama (2013) classifies a skill name that indirectly aligns with its visualization as associative name. Associative and indexical naming occurs when a skill's name does not match the visuals yet it relates to the lore of the hero itself whether its backstory or its purpose in the backstory. In *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang,* we chose Hilda's *Art of Hunting* as an example.

Figure 4. *Art of Hunting* by Hilda

By looking at the visual, Hilda hits her enemy 3 times with her axe with the last hit dealing splash damage. Through the mismatched naming and visuals, the player could only conclude that Hilda has a skill capable of doing heavy damage and splash damage but the naming still correlates with her backstory of her being a tribal,

not only is she a combatant she is also a hunter whose role is to provide for the tribe. The mismatch between naming & visuals and the owner's narrative encourages players to not only understand the hero's gameplay but also their narrative.

Associative and Non-Indexical

Associative, implied by Purnomo & Purnama (2013), and non-indexical, proposed by Sartika et al. (2023), refers to when a skill name does not match its visual and its owner's narrative. Associative and non-indexical skill focuses on showing the visual without matching its name or the owner's narrative, Karrie's *Speedie Lightwheel* for instance.

Figure 5. *Speedie Lightwheel* by Karrie

This screenshot shows that Karrie enters a state where she dual-wields her star-shaped weapons as indicated by the noticeable glow on her stars, doubling the attack effects and allowing her to deal more damage until it ends. The name and narrative contradict each other because Karrie's ability is not mentioned at all in her backstory, this occurs due to the less importance of her narrative to be adopted into a skill name, and to label without adding any significant meaning.

Honor of Kings

Real and Indexical

Furthermore, real and indexical name is not only found in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang,* but also in *Honor of Kings.* Some characters in this game have skill names that are directly related to the visualization, real name as classified by Purnomo & Purnama (2013), and its owner's narrative, indexical as proposed by Sartika et al. (2023).

Figure 6. *Unruly Blade* by Dun

In the game *Honor of Kings*, the character Dun has the *Unruly Blade* skill, which is categorized as a real and indexical classification. Visually, this skill involves aggressive and unpredictable sword movements, embodying the unruly aspect of its name. The skill's iconography and animations emphasize a fierce fighting style, therefore players can anticipate the skill's high damage potential and strategize accordingly. Narratively, *Unruly Blade* is in line with Dun's nickname as the Unruly Blade which confronts traditional fighting disciplines, thereby deepening the game's lore.

Real and Non-Indexical

In the game *Honor of Kings,* there are also several real and non-indexical heroes. These heroes have skill names that are directly the same as the visualization, real name as classified by Purnomo & Purnama (2013). However, the skill names and background stories are different, non-indexical name as proposed by Sartika et al. (2023).

Figure 7. *Whirling strike* by Arthur

In the skill visualization for Arthur's *Whirling Strike* from *Honor of Kings*, the correspondence between the skill name and the visual effect is obvious and

straightforward. The skill name *Whirling Strike* precisely reflects the movement and action executed, as Arthur executes a rapid spinning attack that matches the concept of spinning. Correspondence between skill names and visual representation improves user experience by creating a clear and intuitive connection between described and observed actions. Nevertheless, in the story, he is known as the King of Swords, and the possessor of the sword Excalibur. However, the skill's name does not inherently refer to Arthur's story or deeper narrative elements related to the character. The nonexistence suggests that the hero's narrative identity is not emphasized in skill naming conventions, most likely due to the focus on gameplay clarity and straightforward skill recognition.

Associative and Indexical

In *Honor of Kings* also found associative, proposed by Purnomo & Purnama (2013), and indexical, implied by Sartika et al. (2023), is when a skill's name does not match the visuals but it relates to the hero's backstory or their purpose in backstory. In *Honor of Kings*, the researchers took Loong's *Infinite Vastness* as an example.

Figure 8. *Infinite Vastness* by Loong

Visually, Loong reveals his true white dragon form and soars into the sky. Loong's visual skill is not related to the name of the skill, players can only conclude that Loong can turn into a white dragon and it has nothing to do with the name of the skill. However, it is related to Loong's backstory where Loong comes from an extinct race, Loong fights to bring back the name of his race therefore that it is widely known as before and makes himself known to all creatures as the strongest. Indeed, this makes players aware of the visual skills but also Loong's backstory

Associative and Non-Indexical

Associative, implied by Purnomo & Purnama (2013), and non-indexical, proposed by Sartika et al. (2023), refers to when a skill name does not match its

visual and its owner's narrative. Associative and non-indexical, where skill names are not related to visuals and narrative thus players only focus on gameplay, like Lian Po's skill Magma Slam, the hero in Honor of Kings.

Figure 9. *Magma Slam* by Lian Po

By looking at the visual, Lian Po hits the ground with one hand to gather power and gains a shield that negates damage. The name of Lian Po's skill is not related to visuals or narrative, Lian Po's ability is also not mentioned in his history where Lian Po is an ordinary human being who serves as a general in his clan, a clan that has a mining area, making his clan more powerful than others. Since Lian Po and his people were not very strong, this made them often involved in battles with other clans to fight over mines. It could be concluded that the narrative of the hero is not a priority on particular occasions in composing skill names.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of skill naming in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honor of Kings* shows that names are more than just labels, they are strategic tools that balance the narrative immersion and ludic functionality. This study shows that both video game developers use a purposeful language formula to control player cognition by applying the four-part category of real-indexical, real-non-indexical, associative-indexical, and associative-non-indexical naming.

These results are important because they show what MOBA game design priorities are. The existence of non-indexical or associative categories implies that lore accuracy is commonly sacrificed for mechanical clarity, whereas real-indexical names represent the perfect standard of immersion by precisely matching visual mechanics with hero lore. This suggests that to achieve maximum strategic comprehension in competitive, fast-paced digital environments, the ludic visual—the instant knowledge of a skill's function often takes priority over narrative depth.

Additionally, by moving the study of names from static identification to dynamic, action-based signifiers, this research enhances the area of onomastics. It demonstrates that names in modern media have more purposes than simply identifying an entity; they also provide guidance to the user on how to engage with a digital system. In order to analyze how language facilitates the player's cognitive bridge between sensory input (visuals) and ludic output (strategy/gameplay), this study offers a fundamental framework.

This study provides a powerful tool for analyzing naming tactics in various interactive media where skill-based mechanisms are crucial, outside of the MOBA genre. In the end, these results imply that naming is a balancing act for game developers: a name needs to be both pragmatic enough to win a match and poetic enough to create an immersion.

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