

NEW TENDENCIES AND PECULIARITIES IN THE FORMATION OF ACRONYMS IN MODERN ENGLISH

Dumitru MELENCIUC

Moldova State University

The evolution of acronyms is often accompanied by a metasemiotic usage. Names of institutions and organizations are chosen to sound more attractive. Internet users actively contribute in forming new abbreviations, including acronyms and backronyms. Languages are subject to two contrary tendencies: improvements of means of speech, linguists support diversification and renovation of suggestive and emotional possibilities of language expressivity. The principle of discourse economy implies the reduction of linguistic units to the minimal space and time dimensions of the presented text, pragmatic exigency characteristic to modern times. We observe the process of abbreviation of various abridged units having a pragmatic character, expressing as much information in as little space and time possible. Abbreviations are used to codify linguistic information for the optimization of communication.

Keywords: *Acronym, backronym, metalinguistic unit, abbreviation of abbreviations, metasemiotic usage.*

TENDINȚE ȘI PARTICULARITĂȚI NOI ÎN FORMAREA ACRONIMELOR ÎN LIMBA ENGLEZĂ CONTEMPORANĂ

Se întreprinde o analiză a fenomenelor lingvistice și extralingvistice în formarea acronimelor, numărul cărora crește vertiginos în limba engleză. Există dicționare ce conțin de la sute de mii până la câteva milioane de acronime (mai ales în dicționarele plasate pe Internet) [8]. O bună parte din aceste lexeme sunt create și propuse ca unități lexicale potențiale, însă nu toate vor fi acceptate în procesul de comunicare oficial. Un număr mare de abrevieri au fost și sunt permanent create cu contribuția participanților la comunicarea prin Internet. Multe abrevieri, inclusiv acronimele și bacronimele, fac parte din argoul folosit în comunicarea prin Internet, cu conținut umoristic, colocvial etc.

Cuvinte-cheie: *acronim, bacronim, unitate metalingvistică, abrevierea abreviaturilor.*

The term *acronym* comes from the Greek (*akros* - tip, and *anyma* - name) and had not been coined until 1943. The combination *toracronym* is a blending of *Torah* and *acronym*. A Hebrew word that expresses a particular idea, and whose letters were initially chosen to form an acronym for word combinations expressing very important ideas. Here are some examples: ADAM (the Hebrew word for 'human being'; derived from *adamah*, ground, from which man was created – spelled *alef, daled, mem*) from *Eifer* [ash/dust], *Dam* [blood], *Marah* [bile]; YISRAEL is another acronym coming from the Hebrew word meaning *to prevail over the Divine* - and spelled *yud, shin, reish, alef, lamed*; *the Children of Israel* – called *Yisrael*, the initials coming from *Yeish Shishim Reebo Osiyos LaTorah* [15]. The use of acronyms in various functional styles is often accompanied by a metasemiotic and even humorous effect. Names of institutions, organizations, etc. are chosen to sound more attractive and produce an impact on people. The subjective character in their formation is increasing in the fields of science, politics, economy, social life and especially in internet where we observe a process of compiling dictionaries of acronyms and abbreviations [8]. Internet users contribute with new acronyms and backronyms [10]. Unusual compressed units come into being, jovial, euphonic, recognizable in form, related to some well-known names, people would get interested in the object or phenomenon they represent. Names of companies, organizations, associations, programs, projects, etc. may intentionally correspond to well-known historical persons, constellations, continents, cities, deities, social-political movements, natural phenomena, etc, making the compressed terms more attractive. The process of lexicalization of acronyms takes place on the basis of words existing in the vocabulary. Acronyms may be intentionally chosen so to form certain associations. Such nouns may function as personified metaphors, sometimes producing a humorous effect. ADAM – Advanced Data Management System (Acronym). Adam – the first of the world (lexicalized proper noun). EDGAR – Electronic Gathering Analyses and Retrieval System Edgar – male name. EDIC – Engineering Data Identification and Control. Edic – male name. HERMES – Higher Education Resource Materials. Education and Service. Hermes – God in Ancient Greek. CHEOPS – Chemical Operation System. Cheops – name of pharaoh in Ancient Egypt. ISIS – Independent School Information Service. Isis – Goddess in Ancient Egypt. IDA – International Development Abstracts. Ida – female name. There are some different examples which confirm the fact of intentional use of this or that proper name [8].

Double compression of abbreviations (or abbreviation of abbreviations) is an example of discourse economy. *Laser* in about 500 word combinations may be and is often re-abridged. Thus, in "Acronyms and Initialisms Dictionary" [7, p.26] we find: LIF – Laser Interference Filter; LFL – Laser Flash Lamp; LID – Laser Intrusion Detection; LIED -Laser Initiating Explosion Devise. In other dictionaries we find some more (16): LMI – Laser Microfilming, Inc., LVIS – Laser View data Information Service. The acronym *laser* here is further compressed as a component part of new abbreviated lexical units. Such examples we find in various publications. In the internet NATO Textbook ([13] we find 68 abbreviations with letter N representing to NATO, like in SNLC Senior NATO Logisticians' Conference;. In some examples there are 2 compressed abbreviations. STC SHAPE Technical Centre SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe); NACMO = NATO ACCS (Air Command and Control System) Management Organization; NAPMA = NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Programme Management Agency [13]. Thus in the following abridged units the letter N corresponds to NATO: MNC, NAADC, NAAG, NAC, NACMA, NACMO, NACOSA, NADC, NADEFCOL, NADGE, NAEW&C, NAEWF, NAFAG, NAHEMA, NAMEADSMA, NAMFI, NAMMA, NAMMO, NAMP, NAMSA, NAMSO, NAPMA 2 acronyms are abridged here (NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control -AEW&C), NAPMO, NAPR (p.419), NATMC, NAU, NCARC NCCIS, NCISS, NC3A (NATO Consultation, Command and Control Agency) NC3B (NATO Consultation, Command and Control Board, NC3O (NATO Consultation, Command and Control Organisation), NCS, (p.420), NDC, NDMC, NDMP, NEFMA, NEFMO, NETMO(A), NFR, NHMO (NATO HAWK Management Office), NHPLO, (NATO HAWK Production and Logistics Organisation), NHQC3S, NIAG, NICS, NIDS (p.421), NIMIC, NMA, NMR, NNAG, NOS, NPC, NPLO, NPS, NPSC, NSA, NSC, NSIP, NSLB, NSN, (p.422), NSO, NTG, NUC, ONS, SNLC [13]. In FACES (FORTRAN Automatic Code Evaluation System), FOS (FORTRAN Operating System), FRUGAL (Frugal) – (FORTRAN Rules Used as General Applications) we discover that F is the abbreviation of FORTRAN/Fortran which is a blending of *formulation translation*. While in case of INFOR (Information Network and File Organization; Information-Oriented Language; Information Processing and Operational Research; Institute for Nyttningorade and Forsknings Resultat; Interactive FORTRAN) - in the last combination FORTRAN is represented not by F, but by FOR. All possible hybrids are found in the language: CoSIRA (Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas). In PIPs (Project Information Packages) – the plural number was preserved in "Packages". While in PLANES (Programmed Language-based Enquiry System) *Language-based* is reduced only to LAN – a clipping in order to get a specific acronym. [16] Most of the acronyms are created to resemble a certain existing word, for the reader to identify it, express some metasemiotic connotations, making it more attractive.

Homonymous combinations. Analyzing the most voluminous Internet Acronym Dictionary we discover a high number of homonyms of many abridged units: AA – 3396 definitions, AB – 3195, ABE – 318; AC – 6701, 27 ACRONYM definitions, ACROSS – 21, ACRA – 205, ACT – 2223, ADA – 956, BABA – 187, CAN – 867, CAP – 3143, CAT – 2044, CATS – 1180; LAB – 340, CIA – 98, DA – 917, DIG – 26, LASER – 137, LASE – 58, MP – 592, SAC – 290. RAPID – 32, POD – 105, POM – 77, POP – 107, ORION -7, etc. [8; 7, 36-38] LB may correspond to: laser beacon, laser beam, laser blanking, laser bomb, laser bonding, laser burst [ibidem]. **Metaphorical homonymy** is flourishing in all the functional styles of the English language and this is being borrowed into other languages, including the method of formation of humorous slang backronyms, etc. Plenty of acronyms homonymous to the existing units may be intentionally chosen in order to compress information and form certain emotional associations. Metaphorical homonymy is flourishing in all the functional styles of the English language and this is being borrowed into other languages, including the method of formation of humorous slang backronyms. They may be intentionally chosen to compress information and express certain emotional associations. Taboo words are also used to form acronyms. The term is a portmanteau or a blending and defined as a "reverse acronym" or bachronym [10]. False acronyms are also created. Thus, the distress signal SOS is believed to be an abbreviation for Save Our Ship, Save Our Souls, Survivors On Ship, Swim Or Sink, Stop Other Signals. It was chosen because of the simple Morse code representation: three dots, three dashes, three more dots [10]. Companies or their products may be the target of multiple humorous backronyms: **BMW:** Big Money Works, Bought My Wife, Brutal Money Waster, Break My Window, Break My Windshield, Babbling Mechanical Wench, Beastly Monstrous Wonder, Beautiful Masterpieces on Wheels, Beautiful Mechanical Wonder, Barely Moving Wreck, Big Money Waste, Big Money. Why? Big Money Works, Born Moderately Wealthy, Breaks Most Wrenches, Bring Many Wrenches, Brings Me Women, Brings More

Women, Broken Money Waster, Broke My Wallet, Broken Monstrous Wonder, Bumbling Mechanical Wretch, Blasphemous Motorized Wreck; **BUICK**: Big Ugly Indestructible Car Killer, Big Ugly Imitation Chrome King.[11] **CHEVROLET**: Can Hear Every Valve Rap On Long Extended Trips, Cheap, Hardly Efficient, Virtually Runs On Luck, Every Time, Cracked Heads, Every Valve Rattles, Oil Leaks Every Time, Constantly Having Every Vehicle Recalled Over Lousy Engineering Techniques, Condition Hopeless, Entire Vehicle Relies On Leftover Engine Technology [ibidem]; **FIAT**: Failure in Italian Automotive Technology, Fix It Again, Tony, Fix It All the Time, Found In A Toilet, Feeble Italian Attempt at Transportation [ibidem]. **FORD**: Frigin' Old Rebuilt Dodge, Fix Or Repair Daily, Found On Road Dead, Fast Only Rolling Downhill, First On Race Day, First On Recall Day, Fabricated Of Refried Dung, Fails On Rainy Days, Fantastically Orgasmic Realistic Dream, Fatally Obese Redneck Driver, Fault Of R&D, Finally Obsolete Racing Device, Fireball On Rear Denting, First On Road to Dump, First On Rust and Deterioration, Fix Or Recycle Dilemma, Flipping Over Results in Death, Flipped Over Roadside Disaster, Follow Our Rusty Dogsled, Foot On Road Decelerates, Forced On Reluctant Drivers, Formed Of Rejected DNA, Forwarded Once; Return Denied, Forward Only; Reverse Defective, Forlorn, Old, Rattridden Dustbin, Fork Over Repair Dough, Fouled Out Re-done Dodge, Frequent Overhaul, Rapid Deterioration, Free Or Reduced Drastically, Frequent Opinion: Really Disappointed, Fumes and Odors Readily Detectable, Funny Old Rattling Dump, Forget Out Running Dale (Earnhardt or Jarrett), Features O.J. and Ron`s DNA, Found Out-Right Dangerous, Future Of Racings Delight, (backwards) Driver Returns On Foot, (backwards) Dumb Rednecks Own Fords. [ibidem] **GM**: General Maintenance, Great Mistake, Garbage Motors, Generally Miserable, Grossly Misconceived, Gluteus Maximus, Good Money, Goofy's Manufacturing, Gone Mental [11]. Thus, Ford (the car company founded by Henry Ford) may stand for "First On Race Day" (positive impressions) and "Fix Or Repair Daily" and "Found On Road, Dead" by people not pleased with the product. In the Russian Internet sites we find humorous backronyms made up by Russian speakers: **ВУЗ** – Выйти Удачно Замуж; **ГИБДД** (Государственная Инспекция Безопасности Дорожного Движения) – 1. Гони Инспектору Бабки и Дуй Дальше; 2. Государственное Инквизиционное Бюро «Деньги Давай!»; **ГПТУ** – Господь Послал Тупых Учиться [9]. Most witty and humorous acronyms have been made up and placed in internet sites or blogs by really creative people. Useful lists and even dictionaries are available in the net to be enjoyed and contributions from visitors are accepted. That is why enthusiastic people managed to create a specific acronymic and backronymic metalanguage that gradually may be accepted by the official printed dictionaries of abbreviations. There are 41 abridged lexical units of ACRONYM and ACROMYMS: *A Clever Re-Organization Nudges Your Memory; A Comical Reduction Of Nomenclature Yielding Meaning; A Company Reaching Out to New Youthful Markets; A Completely Random Order Never Yields Meaning; A Concise Recollection Of Nomenclature Yielding Mnemonics; A Concise Reduction Obliquely Naming Your Meaning; A Contrived Reduction Of Nomenclature Yielding Mnemonics; A Contrived Reduction Of Nomenclature Yielding Mostly nonsense; A Crazy Reminder Of Names You Misplaced; A Cross Reference Of Notes Yielding Messages, etc.* [16]. Having analyzed online abbreviations we observe that many internet blogs and dictionaries use and accumulate abridged units belonging mostly to the colloquial stylistic layer, corresponding to various social contexts. For example: *AEAP – As Early As Possible, AFAIC – As Far As I'm Concerned; AFAICS – As Far As I Can See; AFAICT – As Far As I Can Tell; AFAIK – As Far As I Know; AFAIR – As Far As I Remember; ASAP – As Soon As Possible; BABY – Being Annoyed By You; BEG – Big Evil Grin; HAK- Hugs And Kisses; HAND – Have a Nice Day; NATO – No Action, Talk Only; GOK – God Only Knows; HONDA – Hypertensive, Obese, Non-compliant, Diabetic African-American* [12]. We have analyzed a number of colloquial abbreviations which are not classified as offensive slang and having quite a specific emotional connotation. Many of them are not found in the official printed dictionaries, but they exist in the Internet communication used by many people and we should analyze the given metalinguistic units as part of a continuous communication process. Comparing abbreviated lexical units we find out that there exist various approaches and interpretations in defining a variety of metalinguistic units in the field: *shortenings, curtailings, abridgment, abridgement, contractions, telescoping, shortenings, to telescope, abbreviate, curtail, shorten, contract, blend, blendings, fusion, adhesion abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms, abridged words, brachionymy and brachiology are occasionally used (brachi- means short), cutting-down, shorten* [5]. Some of the terms are used to denote exactly the same thing and some others differ. It is a question of the approach to categorization in the field. The existing terms become part of the international vocabulary in the result of the process of globalization. A great number of units are being constantly created

and entering the usage: Cf. the French *apocope*, *apherese*, *truncation*, *siglaison*, (*acronymy*) *acronymie*, *mot-valise*, *port-manteau*, *initialisme*, - all of them in scientific sources are united in the generic term *abbreviation*. Lately linguists have often used the term *brachionyme*. In French the terms *brachiology*, *brachiographie* (*Brachiographie* – term of Greek origin registered in 1835), *brachionymie*, *brachionyme* are actively used. [7, p.5-8]. The meaning of *brachiology* in Romanian has a narrower meaning than in French, the language it was borrowed from. In Romanian *brahi-* is also mainly used in the field of medicine, for example: *brahial*, *brahicefal*, *brahicefalie*, *brahipod*. Most of these terms have been borrowed from French [4, p.109]. The fact that the new terms *brachiology*, *brachiographie*, *brachionymie*, *brachionyme* become more popular in French can be proved by the fact that they are found in more and more linguistic publications. Thus, A. Ceas in his work "Brachiographie et oralité" (1990) quoting from Marie T. Cabre "Terminologie et traduction" [7, p.7-8] gave an exhaustive explanation of the given term. On the other hand the Canadian linguist Marie T. Cabre remarks the notional area of reduction of lexemes, giving a formula: *sigles-initialism-acronyms-abbreviations*. The scholar considers the abbreviation as a particular case of reducing the volume of a lexeme. Lexicographic sources express an ambiguous attitude towards the introduction of terms in the linguistic usage. On the other hand the linguists have started to use the new term not only in French but even in some other languages. "Le Dictionnaire de la langue française" de Pierre Robert (1994) mentions the term *brachologie* [7, p.8-9]. A generalizing term like *brachologie* in French should help avoid the phenomenon of homonymy, polysemy we come across so often. The creation of abbreviated units and their metalanguage, the compiling of numerous dictionaries in the domain are part of continuous social and linguistic phenomenon. Their existence is due to the important function they have in communication in the globalization process. The increased productivity of abbreviations and shortenings, both in formal and informal styles, is caused by the accelerating tempo of development of the human society and the need to express concisely a permanently increasing amount of information.

Bibliography:

1. ABBYY Lingvo 10, 2004 ABBYY Software Ltd.
2. BAUER, L. *English Word-Formation*. Cambridge, 1984. ISBN 13: 9780521284929
3. CRYSTAL, D. *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*. London, 1992. ISBN:0631176527
4. Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române. Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan”, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1998. ISBN 073-637-087-x
5. MELENCIUC, D., ZBANT, L., CONSTANTINESCU, O. Peculiarities of Acronyms and Shortenings. ANADIS. In: *Journal of the Discourse Analysis Research Centre*. Suceava: Editura Universității „Ștefan cel Mare”, 2008. ISSN 1842-0400
6. MELENCIUC, D. *Comparativistics*. Chișinău: CEP USM, 2003. ISBN 9975-70-210-4
7. MELENCIUC, D. *Peculiarities in the Formation of Abbreviated Lexical Units in Modern English*. Chisinau: Artpoligraf, 2012. ISBN 978-9975-4286-4-4
8. „Acronym Geek - Largest Database of Acronyms and Abbreviations” <http://www.acronymgeek.com/>
9. „Бэкроним – Викиака” <http://itaka.stv.ru/wiki/Бэкроним>
10. „Backronym – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backronym/
11. Car acronyms. www.web-cars.com/humor/acronyms.html/
12. “Emoticon Universe.com Internet Slang/Acronyms” emoticonuniverse.com/slang/
13. MANUALUL NATO. 2001. Office of Information and Press. NATO - 1110 Brussels. www.clr.ro/menu1/manualul%20nato.pdf ISBN 92-845-0164-4 HB0801ROM © NATO 2001.
14. NATO Glossary of Abbreviations Used in NATO Documents and Publications AAP-15 (2007) <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/other/nato2008a.pdf/>
15. PARSHAS M. *Of Acronyms, Bacronyms and Toracronyms*. http://www.torchweb.org/torah_detail.php?id=152
16. SAWONIAK, H. *New International Dictionary of Acronyms in Library and Information Science and Related Fields*. Munchen, London, New York, Paris, 1976. books.google.md/books? ISBN 3110957825

Prezentat la 17.09.2014