



INTERLINGUAL AND INTRALINGUAL FEATURES OF ABBREVIATIONS IN DIFFERENT FIELDS

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Abstract

The article aims to explore the interlingual and intralingual features of abbreviations across various fields. Abbreviations are one of the sources of word formation. As lexical units, they have been attributed to words, concepts and linguistic units in general. Investigating how abbreviations differ between languages (interlingual) and within a single language (intralingual), the study aims to analyze the impact of linguistic diversity on abbreviation usage. By analyzing examples from diverse disciplines, such as medicine, politics, technology and social life, the research sheds light on the nuanced ways, which abbreviations evolve and are interpreted across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries. Considering these features contributes to improved communication and comprehension in multicultural and multidisciplinary contexts.

Key words: abbreviations, word formation, interlingual, intralingual, categorization, classification, linguistic diversity, linguacultural analysis, morphology, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, context, CAP, AID.

One of the primary issues in studying abbreviations is the raise of interest to study the impact of linguistic diversity on abbreviation usage. As Algeo (1977) points out, the term 'abbreviation' encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic phenomena, including acronyms, initialisms, truncations, and contractions. Each of these forms has unique characteristics and functions within language, as explored in depth by Crystal (2008). The challenge arises in delineating the boundaries of what constitutes an abbreviation. This ambiguity evolves the establishment of a consistent and comprehensive framework for analysis, leading to potential inconsistencies in research findings.



Abbreviations are not just linguistic phenomena; they are also deeply intertwined with social and cultural contexts. The usage of abbreviations can signify membership within certain groups or subcultures, serving as linguistic markers of identity. For example, teenagers and young adults often use specific abbreviations that are not commonly used or understood by older generations, highlighting generational differences in language use.

The role of abbreviations in identity formation is particularly noteworthy in online communities. In these digital spaces, abbreviations can signal alignment with certain groups or beliefs, acting as badges of identity. Moreover, cultural norms significantly influence the adoption and adaptation of abbreviations. What is considered acceptable or intelligible in one culture may be entirely different in another, reflecting the diverse ways in which societies use language.

From a pragmatic standpoint, abbreviations serve several functions beyond mere brevity. They are tools for efficient communication, allowing speakers to convey complex ideas or emotions quickly and effectively. In certain contexts, the use of an abbreviation can also imply a level of intimacy or informality, as seen in text messaging between friends.

Investigating abbreviations becomes further complicated when considering cross-linguistic variations. As Myers-Scotton (2006) highlights, different languages utilize abbreviations in diverse ways, influenced by unique phonetic, morphological, and syntactic rules, as well as their acceptance in various social spheres. Additionally, the global dominance of English, particularly in technology and science, has led to the widespread adoption of English abbreviations in other languages, a trend noted by Crystal (2003). This interplay between languages creates a complex scenario for linguists, who must consider these interlingual influences in their analysis. For instance, in political sphere *AID* means *Agency for International Development*, however, in medical context it is a word and means emergency help, it decodes as "*attitude, integrity, dependability, and service*".

If we look at the other example, *CAP* stands for *Common Agricultural Policy (of the European Union)*, but in general it is a word which means *clothing item*.

The digital revolution has had a profound impact on the use and development of abbreviations. The constraints and affordances of digital communication, as described by Baron (2008), such as character limits and the need for swift, efficient messaging, have spurred the creation of numerous new abbreviations. These forms are often fluid, context-dependent, and ephemeral, challenging researchers to



develop methodologies that can capture and analyze these fast-evolving entities. The transient nature of digital communication, coupled with the informal and private contexts in which many abbreviations arise, adds layers of complexity to their study, as discussed by Herring (2013).

Methodological issues form a significant barrier in abbreviation research. Traditional linguistic research methods may not be sufficiently agile or comprehensive to track the rapid development and diverse usage of abbreviations in digital communication. Additionally, accessing and analyzing data from private or informal digital channels raises ethical and practical concerns, a challenge outlined by Androutsopoulos (2008). Researchers must navigate these challenges while ensuring that their methodologies remain robust, ethical, and reflective of the current linguistic landscape.

Abbreviations are not just linguistic constructs; they are deeply embedded in social and pragmatic contexts. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) discuss, the usage of abbreviations can vary significantly based on factors such as age, gender, social group, and cultural background. This variability poses a challenge for researchers, like Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), who seek to understand the sociolinguistic implications of abbreviations. Additionally, the pragmatic aspects of abbreviation usage, such as how they fulfill communicative needs or convey particular social identities, require careful and nuanced investigation, as noted by Holmes (2013). Such misperceiving is observed in intralingual field:

In 2009, the Wisconsin Tourism Federation's biggest problem wasn't finding a way to attract more people to the metropolitan Kenosha area; it was the realization that its initials meant the slang abbreviation for "*What the F---?*" The *WTF* from America's Dairyland has been around since 1979, so it likely predates the vulgar *WTF*. In the end, though, you can't fight an internet meme. The organization changed its name to the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin. (<https://theweek.com/author/ethan-trex>)

The *WTF*'s only consolation must be that it's not alone. In 2008, the North Carolina DMV allowed drivers whose license plates contained "*WTF*" □ to swap out their tags free of charge. The DMV also had to change its website; the sample plate pictured on the site was "*WTF-5505*". (<https://theweek.com/author/ethan-trex>)



The other example DOA- firstly used as *Department of Elder Affairs on Ageing* ,have been changed to *DOA* in 2009, which had no use for Iowa's elderly sleep any easier, eventually changed to *IDA*. (<https://theweek.com/author/ethan-trex>)

More interesting example is observed in the abbreviation *AIDS*.

When Joan Woehrmann started her ambulance company in Whittier, Calif., in 1955, she hit on a pretty brilliant acronym: *AIDS*. The letters stood for "*attitude, integrity, dependability, and service*," which are all great qualities for an ambulance line. The name was also easy to remember in times of crisis. She didn't foresee the name eventually signifying one of the greatest medical catastrophes of the century, though. By 1985, *The Los Angeles Times* reported that Woehrmann's drivers were being taunted and that the public mistakenly started to think that the line only transported *AIDS* patients. Finally, she had enough and changed the line's name to "*AME*," even giving up the ambulances' customized line of "*AIDS 1*" and "*AIDS 2*" license plates. (<https://theweek.com/author/ethan-trex>)

One of the primary challenges in studying abbreviations is the lack of a universally accepted definition. Crystal (2008) points out that the term "abbreviation" encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic phenomena, including acronyms, initialisms, truncations, and contractions. Each of these forms has unique characteristics and functions within language, but their boundaries often overlap, leading to ambiguity, as observed by Aitchison (2012). This lack of clarity complicates the establishment of a consistent and comprehensive framework for analysis, leading to potential inconsistencies in research findings, a concern echoed by Schneider (2003).

Categorizing abbreviations is another significant hurdle. Traditional categorization methods often focus on morphological structures, but such approaches may not fully capture the nuanced and context-dependent nature of abbreviations, especially in informal and digital communication. As Baron (2008) notes, the advent of text messaging, social media, and other digital platforms has given rise to new, often ad hoc forms of abbreviations that defy conventional classification systems. Crystal (2001) also highlights how this evolving landscape necessitates a flexible and adaptive approach to categorization, one that can accommodate the rapid changes in usage and form.

The investigation of abbreviations in linguistics is fraught with challenges, from definitional ambiguities and categorization difficulties to cross-linguistic variations



and the impacts of digital communication. These challenges necessitate a multifaceted approach to research, one that is adaptable, interdisciplinary, and sensitive to the rapidly evolving nature of language.

While *FAA* identifiers for airports aren't technically acronyms, the three-letter codes can give rise to their own headaches. Just ask the Sioux City Gateway Airport, which the *FAA* saddled with the unfortunate designator "SUX." Airport authorities petitioned for a new code, and the *FAA* — "this is not a joke" — offered them "GAY" as a nod to the "Gateway" part of the airport's name.

Sioux City decided that switching to *GAY* probably wouldn't save them much sophomoric taunting, so officials decided to make the best of the *SUX* situation. Now the airport markets playful t-shirts emblazoned with slogans like "Fly *SUX*."

SUX might not even be the worst airport code. According to a 2008 *Los Angeles Times* story, Fresno's is *FAT*, and Perm, Russia's is *PEE*. The big winner has to be Fukuoka, Japan, though. It is clear to guess how that one gets abbreviated.

Furthermore, In 1998, the Washington Public Power Supply System chose to change its name to Energy Northwest to discourage people from pronouncing its unfortunate acronym as "Whoops!" The old name left the utility open to quite a bit of taunting in 1983, when the *WPPSS* defaulted on \$2.25 billion worth of bonds. Whoops indeed. (<https://theweek.com/author/ethan-trex>)

The work of Crystal (2001) on language and the Internet highlights the importance of considering digital communication in understanding modern abbreviation usage. Furthermore, studies by Baron (2008) on language in an online and mobile world underscore the need for adaptability in linguistic research methodologies. As linguistics continues to grapple with these issues, exemplified in the work of Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) on instant messaging and teen language, the study of abbreviations remains a fertile ground for exploring the dynamic and adaptive qualities of human communication.

THE C-WORD.

In 2002, Microsoft had to do a little rearranging on the fly. It quickly and quietly changed its ribald "*Critical Update Notification Tool*" to the more family friendly "*Critical Updated Notification Utility*."

The political changes have significantly influenced the formation and usage of abbreviations. In the digital era, characterized by the rapid exchange of information,



the demand for concise and efficient communication has never been higher. This necessity has paved the way for a plethora of new abbreviations, particularly evident in online communication channels such as social media, instant messaging, and email. What's wrong with *NIC*? In English, nothing. In Arabic, a whole heck of a lot. When the Coalition Provisional Authority began planning new Iraqi armed forces in 2003, they originally called them the *New Iraqi Corps*. They hit a big snag, though. As *ABC News* reported, in Arabic "*nic*" is "a colorful synonym for fornication." The coalition quickly changed the name to the *New Iraqi Army*.

In social media platforms, where character limits often constrain communication, users have ingeniously crafted abbreviations to convey their messages succinctly. These abbreviations are not static; they evolve, reflecting the dynamic nature of online discourse. For instance, the abbreviation 'LOL' (laugh out loud) has seen various iterations, such as 'LMAO' (laughing my ass off) and 'ROFL' (rolling on the floor laughing), each conveying varying degrees of amusement.

Instant messaging apps, another digital communication frontier, have also contributed significantly to the evolution of abbreviations. The need for quick, real-time communication in these platforms has led to the creation of abbreviations that are often context-specific and understood within particular user groups. This phenomenon underscores the importance of understanding the social and communicative contexts in which abbreviations are used.

Moreover, abbreviations can be employed to express attitudes and emotions. For instance, the use of 'TBH' (to be honest) often prefaces a statement of sincerity or candid opinion. In formal communication, however, the use of abbreviations is generally limited, reflecting the differing norms and expectations of various communicative contexts.

Inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic analyses reveal fascinating insights into how different languages approach abbreviations. While English dominates the global landscape of abbreviation usage, particularly in science and technology, other languages have developed their unique abbreviation systems. For example, in languages with non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic or Mandarin, the formation and usage of abbreviations follow different rules and conventions, influenced by the phonetic, morphological, and syntactic structures of the language.

From the investigated topic it can be summarized that emerging research methodologies, including computational linguistics and big data analytics, offer promising avenues for studying abbreviations. These approaches allow for the



analysis of large datasets, providing insights into patterns and trends that might be invisible in smaller samples. However, researchers must navigate these methodologies with caution, ensuring ethical standards are maintained, especially when dealing with private communication.

The study of abbreviations has significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to our understanding of morphology, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics, offering a window into how language adapts and evolves in response to societal and technological changes. In practical terms, understanding abbreviations can inform language education, especially for non-native speakers, and the design of technology, such as autocorrect and predictive text features.

Looking to the future, abbreviation research is poised to explore new frontiers, particularly in the realm of artificial intelligence and machine learning. As technology continues to advance, so too will the ways in which we use and understand abbreviations, offering endless opportunities for linguistic exploration and discovery.

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