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## LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF INITIALS AND ACRONYMS IN SLANG

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the problems of lexical analysis of initials and acronyms in English slang. It is obvious that initials and acronyms are important parts of English lexicology. There are a lot of types of initials and acronyms among English slang words. So, lexical and semantic features of initial and acronymic slang words are discussed in the article.

**Keywords:** abbreviation, acronym, initialism, initial abbreviation, prototype, toponymic initials, medical initials, internet acronym.

Shortening is described as the process of subtracting phonemes or morphemes from words and word-groups without changing their lexico-grammatical meaning in English lexicology. Additionally, a shortened word keeps a correlation with its prototype and can be utilized instead of a long form.

There are several types of shortening in English, they are followings:

Abbreviation is considered one of the kinds of shortened words formed as a consequence of shortening and made up of initial letters of words, word-groups or phrases. This term first appeared in linguistics in 1400s A.D. They are subdivided into two types:

**1. Graphical abbreviations.** They are a specific type of the shortening relevant to the only written speech, and constitute signs representing words and word-groups of high frequency of occurrence in various spheres of human activity as for instance, ***RD*** for ***Road*** and ***St*** for ***Street*** in addresses on envelopes or letters; ***tu*** for ***tube***, ***aer*** for ***aerial*** in Radio Engineering literature. They are restricted in use to written speech, occurring only in various kinds of texts, articles, books and advertisements. While in reading, many of them are substituted by the words or

phrases that they represent, for example, DR.= doctor, Mr. = mister, Oct. = October [1].

Pursuing an opinion of R.Ginzburg and others, we can say that graphical abbreviations cannot be considered new lexical vocabulary units.

**2. Lexical abbreviations.** Unlike graphical abbreviations, they can be used both in written and oral speech. They are also divided into the following types:

*a) initialism/initial abbreviation/letter abbreviation/alphabetical abbreviation* is a shortening which is pronounced as a series of letters. They also retain correlation with their prototypes. For example, *B.B.C.* ['bi: 'bi: 'si:] – the British Broadcasting Corporation; *M.P.* ['em 'pi:] – Member of Parliament; *S.O.S.* ['es 'ou 'es] – Save Our Souls.

A number of studies have been done concerning slang, shortened words in a standard language or near disciplines. I.V.Arnold deems that curtailed words arise in various types of colloquial speech and have a stylistic colouring. Stylistically coloured shortened words may belong to any variety of colloquial style. They are especially numerous in various branches of slang: school slang, service slang, sport slang, newspaper slang, such as *bobby*, *cabbie*, *mac*, *maxi*, *mini*, *movies*. Nursery words are often clipped: *gran*, *granny*; *hanky* from *handkerchief*; *ma* from *mama*; *nightie* from *nightdress*; *pinnie* from *pinafore* [2]. Additionally, E. Partridge, W. Labov and others contributed to the development of slang.

While looking through the initial slang abbreviations among four different slang dictionaries, we found out that the quantity indicated considerably. That's why, we decided to classify them as to their structural and semantic peculiarities.

According to the structural form, we divided them into the following groups:

**1. Initial abbreviations formed by only initial letters of their prototypes:**

- *initial abbreviations having only “one-word” prototypes* such as *B./b* (*n* **British**) – *a bastard* [3]; *C. (n)* - 1) *the Viet Cong, a member of the Viet Cong*; 2) *cocaine*; 3) *one hundred dollars* [9], [159]; *D. (n)* – *LSD (an illegal drug)* [4]; *G. (n)* – *guy* [5]; *H. (n)* – *heroin (R.Spears)*; *j (n)* – *a joint (a cigarette containing*

marijuana) (T.Dalzell); **M** (n) – 1) morphine; 2) marijuana (T. Dalzell, T.Victor); **E.** (n) – the drug ecstasy, an illegal drug; **T** (n) – marijuana; **v** (*adj British*) – very (T.Thorne);

- *initial abbreviations having phrasal or idiomatic prototypes*, for example, **d.m.**'s (*n pl British*) – “Doc Marten’s” footwear; **DMT** (n) – di-methyl triptamine, a synthetic hallucinogenic drug developed in the 1970s; **D.A./A.D.** (*n British*) – drug addict; **B.A.** (*n American*) – a troublesome, violent or anti-social person; **B.f./b.f.** (*n British*) – bloody fool; **B.M.O.C.** (*n American*) – “big man on campus”, a preppie and student term for an influential fellow student; **B.O.F./b.o.f.** (*n British*) – a “boring old fart”; **D.O.M.** (n) – a “dirty old man” is applied, usually by females, to anyone male and lecherous regardless of age; **h.a.** (*n British*) – home address; **P.I.** (n) – a private investigator, private detective, private eye; **P.N.G.** (*n British*) – persona non grata; **MTF** (*n British*) – a sexually importunate male. The initials stand for “must touch flesh”; **t.l.u.** (*n American*) – a “tight little unit”, an attractive compact girl; **p.l.u.** (*n British*) – “people like us”, an upper-class code term of approbation and social discrimination; **D.O.A.** (*adj*) – unconscious, inert. A facetious use of the American police and hospital jargon “dead on arrival” to mean “dead to the world”, particularly after taking drugs or alcohol (T.Thorne); **B.V.D.s** (*n American*) – men’s underwear (R.Spears); **the D.Ts.** (n) – delirium tremens; the withdrawal symptoms of an alcohol or drug addiction; **P.D.A.** (*n American*) – a “public display of affection”. A preppie code term for overt kissing, hugging, usually said in a disapproving tone; **PR** (n) – a Puerto Rican or Puerto Rico (T.Dalzell); **ACAB** (*British*) – all coppers are bastards (T. Dalzell, T.Victor).

**2. Initial abbreviations containing “letter + lexeme” elements:** **B-girl** (*n American*) – a prostitute or woman of dubious morals who frequents bars; **c-note** (n) – a hundred dollars or a hundred pounds (not necessarily always in the form of a hundred-denomination bill), from Latin numeral C: one hundred; **a-head** (n) – a user of the drug amphetamine; **G-man** (*n American*) – an FBI agent (T.Thorne); **A-game**(n) – in a casino or cardroom, the poker game with the highest stakes; **A-**



**gunner (n)** – an assistant gunner; **A-man (n)** – a police officer assigned to a squad car; **B bomb (n)** – an amphetamine inhaler; **B-boy (n)** – a breakdancer, **D girl (n)** – a low-level female employee in a movie or television studio (T.Dalzell).

**3. Initial abbreviations constituting “lexeme + letter” elements:** **jolly d. (adj British)** – “jolly decent”, often used ironically or sarcastically; **vitamin A (n)** – LSD (an illicit drug); **vitamin T (n)** – marihuana; **vitamin E (n)** – ecstasy (an illegal drug); **vitamin C (n)** – cocaine (T.Thorne); **bad-o (adj)** – excellent; **double L(n)** – a telephone; **fishbed-D (nickname)** – the Soviet MiG-21 fighter aircraft (T.Dalzell); **pot A(n)** – a prisoner who has received a minimum of ten years is regarded as a potential Category A prisoner; **San Q (nickname)** – the San Quentin state prison, San Rafael, California; **single-O (n)** – a criminal, gambling cheat or a prisoner who acts alone (T. Dalzell, T.Victor).

**4. Initial abbreviations containing “letter + number” elements:** **B-52 (n American)** – a beehive hairstyle worn in the early 1960s and occasionally revived (T.Thorne); **C-47 (n)** – a clothespin; **F-40 (n)** – an orange-coloured 100 mg capsule of secobarbital sodium, a central nervous system depressant; **V-8s (n)** – men’s shorts (T.Dalzell); **P-38 (n)** – 1) a police-issue 38 calibre revolver; 2) in Vietnam war usage, the small can-opener included with individual field rations; **M20 (n)** – a meeting place; **M25 (n)** – a tablet of MDMA, the recreational drug known as ecstasy; **M8 (n)** – in text messaging to mean a “mate” (T. Dalzell, T. Victor).

**5. Syndetically connected initial abbreviations:** **d and d(adj)** – drunk and disorderly; **R and R (n)** – relaxation. A piece of armed-services shorthand for “rest and recreation” now used by civilians; **T and E (adj British)** – “tired and emotional”, for instance, drunk; **V and T (n British)** – vodka and tonic (T.Thorne); **M and M (n)** – any tablet drugs used for recreational purposes; **P and Q (n)** – solitary confinement in prison. Abbreviated “peace and quiet” (T. Dalzell, T. Victor); **T and A (n)** – an operation to remove one’s tonsils and adenoids (hospital) (R.Spears); **V and X (n)** – in carnival usage, a five-and-dime store; **A and A (n)** – in

*the military, a leave for rest and recreation; A and B (n) – assault and battery (T.Dalzell).*

As to the semantic peculiarities, we divided them into:

**1. Initial abbreviations relevant to drug addiction:** *C 2 - cocaine; D – LSD (an illegal drug); H – heroin; j – a joint (a cigarette containing marijuana); M – 1) morphine; 2) marijuana; E – the drug ecstasy, an illegal drug; T – marijuana; DMT – di-methyl triptamine; D.A./A.D. – drug addict; D.O.A. – unconscious, inert; a-head – a user of the drug amphetamine; B bomb – an amphetamine inhaler; vitamin A – LSD (an illicit drug); vitamin T – marijuana; vitamin E – ecstasy (an illegal drug); vitamin C – cocaine; F-40 – an orange-coloured 100 mg capsule of secobarbital sodium; M25 – a tablet of MDMA; M and M (n) – any tablet drugs used for recreational purposes.*

**2. Initial abbreviations belonging to alcoholism:** *the D.Ts. (n) – delirium tremens; d and d (adj) – drunk and disorderly; T and E (adj British) – “tired and emotional”, for instance, drunk; V and T (n British) – vodka and tonic.*

**3. Initial abbreviations associated with the military:** *fishbed-D – the Soviet MiG-21 fighter aircraft; C - 1) the Viet Cong, a member of the Viet Cong; R and R) – relaxation; A and A – in the military, a leave for rest and recreation.*

**4. Initial abbreviations related to the police:** *A and B – assault and battery; P-38 – 1) a police-issue 38 calibre revolver.*

**5. Initial abbreviations connected with criminality and prison:** *P and Q – solitary confinement in prison; single-O – a criminal, gambling cheat or a prisoner; pot A – a prisoner who has received a minimum of ten years is regarded as a potential Category A prisoner.*

**6. Initial abbreviations expressing occupation:** *G-man – an FBI agent; A-man – a police officer assigned to a squad car; D girl – a low-level female employee in a movie or television studio; B-boy – a breakdancer; P.I. – a private investigator, private detective.*

**7. Initial abbreviations portraying a human being: M8** – *in text messaging to mean a “mate”*; **B.O.F./b.o.f.** – *a “boring old fart”*; **B.f./b.f.** – *bloody fool*; **B.A.** – *a troublesome, violent or anti-social person.*

**8. Initials relevant to males: G** – *guy*; **MTF** – *a sexually importunate male*; **D.O.M.** – *a “dirty old man” is applied, usually by females, to anyone male and lecherous regardless of age*; **B.M.O.C.** – *“big man on campus”, a preppie and student term for an influential fellow student.*

**9. Initials relevant to females: t.l.u.** – *a “tight little unit”, an attractive compact girl*; **B-girl** – *a prostitute or woman of dubious morals who frequents bars.*

**10. Descriptive initials: jolly d.** – *“jolly decent”*; **bad-o** – *excellent*; **v** – *very.*

**11. Initials used for abusing somebody: B./b** – *a bastard*; **p.l.u.** – *“people like us”.*

**12. Initials indicating one’s nationality: PR** – *a Puerto Rican or Puerto Rico.*

**13. Initials showing one’s diplomatic status: P.N.G.** – *persona non grata.*

**14. Toponymic initials: V and X** – *in carnival usage, a five-and-dime store*; **M20** – *a meeting place*; **San Q** – *the San Quentin state prison*; **h.a.** – *home address.*

**15. Initials related to clothing: V-8s** – *men’s shorts*; **B.V.D.s** – *men’s underwear*; **d.m.’s** – *“Doc Marten’s” footwear.*

**16. Initials representing banknotes: C - 3)** *one hundred dollars*; **c-note** – *a hundred dollars or a hundred pounds.*

**17. Initials indicating tools: double L** – *a telephone*; **C-47** – *a clothespin*; **P-38** –  
2) *the small can-opener included with individual field rations.*

**18. Poker initials: A-game** – *the poker game with the highest stakes.*

**19. Initials describing a hairstyle: B-52** – *a beehive hairstyle worn in the early 1960s.*

**20. Medical initials: T and A** – *an operation to remove one’s tonsils and adenoids.*



**21. Initials used as an exclamation: P.D.A.** – a “public display of affection”;  
**ACAB** – all coppers are bastards.

**b) acronyms/acronymic abbreviations** are regular vocabulary units spoken as words. For example, UNO [ˈjuːnou] – the United Nations Organisation; NATO [ˈneɪtəʊ] – the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [2].

Having looked through the slang dictionaries, we separated several acronyms and classified them both structurally and semantically.

As to the structural form, we divided them into the following types:

**1. Acronyms made up only capital letters: K.I.S.S. (exclamation)** – “keep it simple stupid!”, avoid unnecessary complications; **JAP (n American)** – a young Jewish girl, especially a wealthy or spoilt one. An acronym of “Jewish American Princess”; **WASP (n)** – a “white anglo-saxon protestant”, a member of the traditionally dominant ethnic group in the US establishment (T.Thorne).

**2. Acronyms made up lower case letters: a.k.a. (n)** – an alias. An acronym of “also known as”; **asap (adv)** – as soon as possible; **dink (n American)** – “double (or dual) income, no kids”, that is a couple with two jobs and no children; **FAQ(s) (n American)** – “frequently asked questions”. A real life acquisition from Internet, where FAQ files were created as a source of informative and regularly updated information (T. Dalzell, T. Victor); **nab (n British)** – the dole. A now obsolete acronym for National Assistance Board heard in the 1950s and 1960s; **oink (n)** – a person with “one income and no kids”; **corgis (n British)** – (a) “couple of really ghastly individuals”; **to d.k. (v American)** – to snub someone or renege on something, to feign ignorance of someone or something. The letters are an acronym of “don’t know” (T.Thorne).

We decided to group acronyms semantically under the following headings:

**1. Acronyms related to a person: dink** – a couple with two jobs and no children; **oink** – a person with “one income and no kids”; **corgis** – (a) “couple of really ghastly individuals”; **JAP** – a young Jewish girl; **WASP** – a “white anglo-saxon protestant”.

**2. Acronyms expressing an action: *to d.k.* – *to snub someone or renege on something.***

**3. Acronyms indicating the manner of an action: *asap* – *as soon as possible.***

**4. Acronyms relevant to the social protection: *nab* – *the dole.***

**5. Acronyms belonging to criminality: *a.k.a.* – *an alias (a false name, usually used by a criminal).***

**6. Internet acronyms: *FAQ(s)* – *“frequently asked questions”.***

**7. Acronyms used for exclaiming someone: *K.I.S.S.* – *“keep it simple stupid!”.***

To conclude, among English slang words there are a lot of initials and acronyms. During the investigation, we found out 5 types of initials structurally and divided them into 21 kinds, while we split acronyms into only 2 structural and 7 semantical types. It bears manifest that English speakers utilize initials more than acronyms in their daily speech.

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