
Perspectives on Acronyms in English and Arabic

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The article is an attempt to reconsider the nature of acronyms in English and Arabic. It suggests criteria for forming acronyms. Acronyms are universal phenomena and their formation should be governed by well-formulated and explicit principles based on regularities. The aim is to have a universal explanatory approach so as to avoid the inconsistency and overlapping in terminologies. In addition to the general principles, there should be language specific mechanisms to cater for special cases. Moreover, there is a need to go beyond a structural analysis and take usage-related aspects into account. It is a fact that the use of acronyms is more popular than their full forms. This may result in lexicalization and may consequently form the base form for other word-formation processes. Also, it may shed light on lexicology and lexical theory, the dynamic relations between writing and speech.

1. Introduction

Morphology is an essential component in all languages. It basically deals with the processes in which words are constructed; that is, it deals with the structure of words and methods of word formation: how new words are created or coined. Morphology is also concerned with morphological variations (allomorphy). The interaction between morphology and phonology can only be represented by a theory which takes into account the morphological structure of words and that certain phonological processes only apply in specific derived environments. In general, there are different morphological processes and rules which enable languages users to add new words to meet the needs of societies. The need filling motive is the most important factor which facilitates the expansion of the lexicon of any language. This is due to the urgent and immediate need to absorb a great number of modern terms for a great number of modern lives. Also, there is a pressure of time to try to coin or to find suitable words or terms for newly introduced objects, inventions, and scientific terms for different disciplines.

New words can be formed by two different methods; namely, word formation and word creation. The essential distinction between the two morphological methods is based on whether words are formed (coined) from already existing lexemes, mainly derivations and compoundings; here we refer to word formation. On the other hand, when sounds (forms) combination designate a new content, new word forms (roots) come into existence (Ronneberger, 1995: 422). This process is called word creation-neologism, and it has nothing to do with word formation.

The distinction between the above mentioned morphological methods is very crucial to the discussion of non-morphemic processes such as abbreviations, clippings, and acronyms. The criterion used to make such distinction is based on the concept of the morpheme. The usual practice that has been used by linguists is to consider the morpheme as the basic unit (form) of morphological segmentations and morphological rules. Accordingly, the morpheme is defined as: the smallest meaningful unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful units; that is, morphemes usually occur with relatively stable meanings in a variety of contexts. For this reason, different competing theories, approaches, and models have been suggested such as the morpheme-based model, and lexical relatedness morphology (Bochner, 1993, Plag, 2003, among others). One of the main points and central to the discussion that follows is that not all morphological phenomena can be accounted for by a neat one-to-one mapping of form and meaning (Plag, 2003). It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the notion of morphemes and the sequences of different approaches. Mainly, my interest is to draw a

distinction between word formation proper in its broad sense and word creation (neologism), such as acronym.

2. Morphematic and Non-morphematic Processes.

The differences between word formation (morphematic) and some word creation processes (non-morphematic) are the following: word formation processes are to some extent regular and productive processes of introducing new words. They are transparent because word formation follows strict and predictable morpho-syntactic rules. For example, derivation and compounding involve a change of meaning and formal compounding involves a change of meaning and a formal extension of the original (source) lexeme. On the other hand, in non-morphematic processes such as abbreviation, initialism, acronym and blending, the source lexeme (s) is/are shortened on the formal level and thus a semantic doublet comes into existence. This entails that the relation between the acronym and its full form is not always synonymous and sometimes a new meaning is added to the new creation. In other cases, if the recipient knows the meaning of the shortened word, he/she can connect the doublet with the denotate without the full form.

Mostly word creation processes unlike regular word formation processes are unproductive and produced with unpredictable phonological rules (Mc Cully, 1988: 29). Consequently, the newly created words are intransparent because they do not follow the regular pattern in the language; they lack morphological structure. That is different shortening processes such as clipping, acronym, and blending are not governed by productive rules like normal word formation. Rather, shortening is the creation of new roots by "a variety of techniques applied in a free creative manner." (Ronneberger, 1995: 422).

3. Acronyms in English

Change in vocabulary is a language universal in all languages. There is a constant and endless change in the lexicon: new words are formed or created. Other words acquire new meanings. Shortened words are important for word formation insofar as the process of word creation is intentional. Although the number of acronyms is constantly increasing, they are somehow treated marginally in linguistic literature. In addition, there is no general and agreed upon opinion on terminology, definition, scope, and formation of acronyms (Canon, 1986: 725). For example the terms abbreviation, acronym, and initialism are often used interchangeably, that is, they are used synonymously although they have some differences between them.

As we indicated above, the main reason for the confusion and the overlap between the terms of all types of abbreviation stem from the fact that

there is no clear criteria to distinguish between the different kinds of word formation processes. In general, to form new lexemes, you base the new forms on signs consisting of a form and content; that is, the new lexemes are transparent: speakers can tell the meanings of such words from the individual morphemes of the newly formed words. Consequently, if the newly formed words are accepted and used by speakers they become part of the lexicon of the language (Lipka, 2002: 212 ff). Mostly, word-formation processes of this kind are regular, rule-governed, and become productive by the common derivational and inflectional morphemes.

However, some word-formation processes are not regular and do not follow the neat and well-structured patterns in the language as linguists assume; that is, they cannot be analyzed in terms of morphemes. To distinguish such newly created forms, some linguists use the term "non-morphematic word formation processes" (Fandrych 2008; Lipka, 2002; Lopez, 2002; among others). The non-morphematic processes include all forms of abbreviations: acronyms, blends, shortenings, and clippings. In short, as stated in Fandrych (2008: 18) "non-morphematic word-formation can be defined as any word-formation that is not morpheme based, ...that is, which uses at least one element which is not a morpheme; this element can be a splinter, a phonestheme, part of a syllable, an initial letter, a number or a letter used as a symbol."

I would like to point out that most studies that deal with this type of non-morphematic word-formation processes have mostly been structurally oriented. However, pure structural criteria cannot adequately explain this type of word creation and do not give a definite answer to how to analyze them. Because of this, Fandrych, (2008) processes a multi-level approach to the formation of acronyms, blends, and clipping. His approach incorporates structural aspects as well as functional sociopragmatic, and semantic aspects of their use.

Fandrych (2008) proposes three major categories in his interdisciplinary approach: structure and modes of production, cognitive aspects, and functional aspects. He states that the non-morphematic processes include word class, medium, and origin (ibid: 74-79). He adds that many acronyms are "technical" and mostly coined in the written medium. They are used to attract attention, popular in headlines as attention-getting devices and to create cataphoric suspense and arouse potential readers' interest by using irony, pun, and alliteration (see, Fandrych 2008: 71-88). He concludes that non-morphematic word-formation is typical of modern times and life: shortenings, in particular, are colorful and unconventional, handy and precise, attention-getting and often funny. Some of them are instantly lexicalized and are no

longer perceived as "special", while others disappear after a short and sometimes spectacular appearance (p: 80).

3.1. Neologism:

The term "neologism" can be defined as the coinage or creation of a lexeme due to language contact and social necessity (Stojicic, 2004: 29-36). Also as Crystal (1992: 264) indicates, the creation of a new lexical item is the result of a response to changed circumstances in the external words, which achieves some currency within a speech community, and the new creation stops being a neologism once it has been accepted and used by the speaker, i.e. institutionalized and lexicalized.

The process of introducing new lexemes can be considered as two types of productivity and creativity (Bauer, 1983: 63). Productivity is systematic and follows the morphological rules of the language, but creativity is not (Lieber, 1992: 3). However, creativity and productivity do not exclude each other. Most of the so-called creative word-formations are, at least to some extent, also productive. It should be noted here that creative neology is a term used for word-formation other than compounding and derivation (Fischer, 1998: 3).

Fischer (1998) sums up the needs and the conditions for forming new words as follows: (loc.cit):

- 1 - What are the conditions for the coining of new words?
- 2 - How do new coinages find their way into the common vocabulary of a speech community?
- 3 - When does a neologism generate a rule such that additional neologism need not be based on any specific word? That is, nonce-formation are spontaneously coined, and they are rarely used due to missing lexical information of these items. They are typically infrequent and no other words can be derived from the base form. Moreover, the meaning of an acronym cannot be deduced from its base form but has to be learned instead. They could be developed into neologisms, which in turn might lead to changes in the language system. Also, a neologism is a word which has lost its status of a nonce - formation but is still one which is considered new by the majority of the members of a speech community. In other words, the new neologism stops being a neologism once it has been accepted and used by the speakers. Some of the important aspects of neologism to become part of the accepted and common vocabulary are: 1) motivation, 2) spreading and institutionalization, 3) a high distribution and frequency, 4) availability (availability refers to the retrieval of words), and 5) productivity (productivity refers to rule -

governed word - formation processes which are carried out by the creation and comprehension of new words.

Word coinage is considered as a language change. Sociolinguistic studies show that the language system allows linguistic variation and, with it, language change at any time, and synchronic variation is the foundation for linguistic change (Weinreich, Labov, Her Zog, 1968: 162).

3.2. Acronyms:

Creative-word formation patterns include acronyms, blends, clipping, lexical phrases and combinations (Fischer, 1998: 23). In general, any kind of shortening can be formed from one or more longer words, even if the longer form is not in use any longer. However, at the synchronic level, a word is only a shortening, if a speaker/hearer associates it with its full form. If this is the case, the formation is transparent. This means that the meaning can be deduced from its base.

An acronym is generally formed from the initial letters of at least three words; it is used as a general classificatory term and designates all forms which come from initial letters or several initials or discontinuous letters. However, there is no general agreement on what type of initials can be considered as acronyms. For example, Crystal (1992: 6) states that an acronym is "a word made up of the initial letters of other words. Some are pronounced letter by letter and some are pronounced as whole words." Here, the significant (form) is reduced to a smaller linguistic unit than a lexeme or morpheme. The basis of the reduction is the unshortened lexicalized word. From the different definitions that one can encounter in the literature, we can say that acronyms are new lexemes without internal morphological structure because only parts of the original full words or morphemes remain because they are not formed through the traditional mechanisms of derivation, affixation or compounding. Moreover, acronyms are formed from the initial letters of several written words. The term "acronyms" is used for forming words from the initial sequences of letters of a name of a company as in IBM, as well as for sequences of sounds as in "Basic".

As stated above, acronyms mostly consist of formatives and not of morphemes. Mostly, the pronunciation of the formatives of the acronym depends on the sequences of the chosen forms, which are pronounceable according to the phonological, phonotactic, and syllable conditions of the given language. The initial consonants and vowels of the words of the base form may yield a pronounceable unit as in "PIN". If a sequence of initial consonants and vowels cannot be pronounced, some may be left out as in ASEAN "Association of South East Asian Nations" instead of AOSEAN.

Usually, the initial letters of structural words are omitted. In certain forms, additional letters are included, e.g. MARV "Maneuverable Reentry Vehicle" instead of MRV. Some acronyms show both patterns, e.g., NIREX for "Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executives instead of "NIRWE."

A number of acronyms contain both upper and lower case letters (see Fischer for more details, 1998: 31). In general, Sheidower (1995:33-36) states that the inclusion of acronyms depends on: the frequency of occurrences, range among sources, durability, and cruciality in a given field.

3.3. Types of acronyms:

The types of acronyms (proper acronyms and initialisms) can be recognized in English as follows:

- 1 - An acronym which has become so familiar that no one remembers what it stands for as in "radar" and "laser".
- 2 - Recursive acronyms are the ones in which one of the letters stands for the actual word abbreviated such as VISA which stands for VISA International Service Association.
- 3 - A backronym is an acronym in which the short form was original and words made up to stand for it afterwards. For example, SOS was originally chosen as a distress signal because it lent itself well to Morse code. Long versions, including "save our ship" and "save our souls", came later.
- 4 - An apronym is an acronym whose letters spell a word meaningful in the context of the term it stands for such as "BASIC", which stands for "Beginners All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code", is a very simple computer programming language.

3.4 General Remarks on Acronyms:

- Some acronyms are pronounced as a word, containing only initial letters, e.g. "laser" for "light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation", "scuba" for "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus", and "radar" for "radio detecting and ranging". These acronyms are the same as they have lost their capital letters and become everyday words. On the other hand acronyms like "NATO" for "North Atlantic Treaty Organization" keep their capital letters like UNESCO and NASA and they are all pronounced as single words.
- Some acronyms are pronounced as a word, containing non-initial letters such as "Interpol" for "International Criminal Police Organization", "radar" for "radio detecting and ranging".

- Some acronyms are pronounced as a word or names of letters, depending on the speaker or context: e.g.: "IRA" is pronounced as letters when used for "Irish Republican Army", but when it is used for "Individual Retirement Account, it can be pronounced as letters or as a word. Other examples of these types are:"FAQ" for frequently asked questions.
- Some acronyms are pronounced as a combination of names of letters and a word as in "CD-ROM" (Si:-di: r?m) for "compact disc read-only memory".
- Some acronyms are pronounced as the names of letters, e.g. "BBC" for British Broadcasting Corporation".
- Some acronyms are pronounced as the names of letters but with a shortcut, e.g. "AAA" (triple a) for "American Automobile Association" or "anti- aircraft artillery."
- There are some acronyms which consist of a sequence of characters and when pronounced as intended resemble the sounds of other words. The term "pseudo - acronyms " is used for such acronym formation such as "Q8" for "Kuwait".
- It has become common among writers to inflect acronyms as ordinary words, using simple "s" for the plural, e.g. "CDs" for compact discs" and CDs" label (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/acronym> = and-initialism)
- Structural words are usually left out when forming an acronym. However, with some acronyms, some of these structural words are used so as to make the acronyms pronounceable as in "TOEFL" for "Test of English as a Foreign Language". Interested readers can see Hamadan and Fareh (2003:186-187) for more on the formation of acronyms in English.

4. Acronyms in Arabic

The fundamental productive grammatical processes affecting Arabic words include vocalic changes and certain other kinds of affixation in the case of derived forms. Both traditional and modern linguists have described Arabic stems as purely consonantal, usually consisting of three radicals and vocalic patterns which are basically formative devices for derivational purposes, and which are functionally interlocked with the radical. The usual practice among linguists is to consider the root (consonants) as one morpheme which has a core meaning. The vocalic pattern is usually considered as another mor-

pheme which has no effect on the core meaning. In other words, two discontinuous morphemes are postulated.

In the most recent approaches, types of nonconcatenative morphology have been linguistically analyzed using separate morphological tiers for the morphemes (McCarthy, 1981). The melodic elements of discontinuous morphemes are interspersed rather than concatenated. For example, the root for "write" in Arabic consists of the three radical consonants [ktb]. Consider these examples:

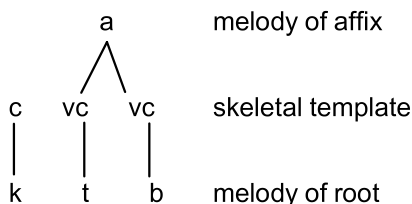
- kataba "he wrote"
- kaataba "correspond"
- kattaba "cause to write"
- kitaab "book"
- kitaabat "act of writing" or "writings"
- ma-ktab "office"

All of the above examples share the "ktb" root morphemes. But when an affix is added to the root morpheme, neither the root nor the affixes remain as a cohesive chunk.

McCarthy (1981) proposes different prosodic templates for Arabic morphology. He proposes that each morpheme occupies a separate tier. For example, the word "Kataba" has the following template and morpheme tiers:

[a]	melody of affix
[cvcvcv]	skeletal template
[ktb]	melody of root

The above template is made up of skeletal elements, [C] and [V], representing timing units of consonants and vowels. The melodies are associated to the prosodic elements of the skeleton left to right, one to one, with consonants mapped to c-elements and vowels mapped to v-elements follows:



However, Mahadin (1986 and 1996) argues that the usual practice among linguists to consider the stem in Arabic as two discontinuous morphemes is inadequate and that it is more practical, less abstract and, there-

fore, more desirable to consider the stem to be one continuous morpheme. He claims that this approach is more capable of avoiding the many exceptions and unresolved problems for certain forms, borrowed words, and different forms of abbreviation processes.

There are different morphological processes in Arabic that can be used to incorporate new words. The most common process in Arabic is "AL-Ishtiqaaq" (derivation). There are three main types of derivation including: Simple "small" derivation, metathesis, root transformation (?ibdaal), and the largest derivation (Stetkevych, 1970: 7). Other morphological methods of derivation include "Al-qiyaas"; the formation of compound words, "Al-NaHt"; the assimilation of foreign words, "Altacriib", and semantic development (Stetkevych, 1970). In Arabic, acronyms are usually placed under "Al-NaHt" process.

"Al-NaHt" in Arabic has been given an inferior status as a process of word coinage, compared to other morphological processes such as derivation, arabization, and translation. Arab philologists are divided on this issue: some have rejected the idea of "Al-NaHat" outright; some are in full support of this process; others have taken a moderate position. Stetkevych (1970:48-55) states that "Al-NaHt" provides a completely different form of lexical creation. As the very term suggests, it consists in the chiseling out or sculpturing of words. The most frequent form of "Naht", and the one accepted by classical philologists, is the formation of a single new word out of two different, otherwise unrelated, words which are conveniently shortened (man-huut). (ibid, 48).

It seems that the need for "Al-NaHat" is of more pressing nature than ever before. This is due to the huge influx of information in both scientific and technological fields. For these reasons, this process, "Al-Nahat", has received a considerable amount of attention in different language and academic circles in the Arab World. In fact, it is discussed under different disciplines such as terminology, word coinage, and lexicography. It should be noted that the term "Al-NaHat" in the Arabic literature is used to include acronyms, abbreviations and clipping.

Moreover, despite the importance of this process in recent years, most people who work in this field prefer to limit the use of abbreviations and other forms of shortenings. The rationale behind limiting such usage is that the Arabic language is a derivational one, and it is not preferable to use abbreviations due to the nature of Arabic lexicography, and the available models in the language which cannot be violated. Moreover, the formation of acronyms in Arabic is characterized as a random arbitrary, unstructured and inconsistent process,(Al-Aqtash,n.d.14-15). Moreover the Arabic acronyms have not been

lexicalized and are not included in the dictionaries by lexicographers. Obviously, there is no continuity and connection between the traditional usage of early Arabic acronyms and of the current ones. Simply, recent formation of acronyms in Arabic is the result of the influence of other European languages, specifically English. In other words, the vast majority of recent acronyms are: loan forms, loan shifts, loan blends, loan shift extension, loan shift creation, loan translation, and loan rendition. In these kinds of borrowing, there is a morphemic transfer, morphemic substitution or both. Transliteration plays a major part in the process of borrowing acronyms. (Antilla 1972:156; Mahadin 1996: 327-349). One of the main reasons is the failure of the academic and language circles in the Arab world to cope with the great number of acronyms in English. Also, time is pressing to find the right model in Arabic.

Two main types for forming acronyms in Arabic can be distinguished: graphemic and morphemic. Graphemic acronyms are mainly used in writing; that is there is no one to one correspondence between the written form and its pronunciation, especially in borrowed or translated forms as the following examples show:

Km “كم” for “kilometer”

JRF “ف.ر.ج” for “Jordan River Fundamental”

JUST “Jordan University of Science Technology”

HRW “Human Rights Watch”

MTF “ف.ت.م” for “Munaḍ amat Al-Tahrir Al- Fili Sti:niyyah”
“Palestinian Liberation Organization”

“د.م.ع” “ج.م.ع” Arab Republic of Egypt”

The morphemic acronyms (I prefer to use the term non-morphemic for the reason discussed in section one) are more common than the former one in all languages including the Arabic language. This type of acronyms is becoming important in certain new neologisms and used in dictionaries as well as in both written and spoken forms. Here, we can identify two types of acronyms: borrowed acronyms and acronyms of Arabic origin. Borrowed acronyms are of two types: either taken literary from the donor language or adapted to fit the Arabic patterns. Examples of adapted ones are:

NATO “ناتو” North Atlantic Treaty Organization”

Radar “رادار” Radio Detection and Ranging”

Unesco “يونسكو” United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization “

Alesco “اليسكو” Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization “

The second type is adapted acronyms in which the form is modified to fit the structure of the Arabic language as in the following examples:

ELCO “الكو” Electric Lighting Company”

JWICO “جوايكو” Jordan Wood Industries Company”

JETT “جت” Jordan Express Tourist Transport”

G.F.C “قافكو” Gatar Fertilizer Company”

However, acronyms which have Arabic origin are modeled according to the same processes of forming acronyms in other languages, but they retain the signifier of the Arabic language; that is the acronyms maintain the semantic features that exist in Arabic as the following examples show:

“hashd” “حشد” "hizb?a f ?b?addimuqrati ?al?urduni"

“Jordanian peoples Democratic Party ”

“Fath” for حركة التحرير الوطني الفلسطيني “Palestinian National Liberation Movement”

“hamas” for حركة المقاومة الإسلامية “Islamic Resistance Movement”

For more examples and discussion see (Hamdan and Fareh (2003:1983-1993).

Hamdan and Fareh(2003:1983-1993) in their study of acronym formation in English and Arabic try to summarize the different methods of forming acronyms. Some of the general issues that are discussed by them are:

- 1 - The general formation mechanism in forming acronyms in English and Arabic is the selection of the initial letters of the words of the source phrase. However, this general pattern is not observed in all types of acronyms and there are some dynamic variables which influence the formation of acronyms such as linguistics, social, political, personal taste, philosophy, purpose, phonetics, semantics and other orthographic ones. For example, If the initial letters of lexical words are used to form the acronyms, the outcome will be unpleasant as in the acronym [Hutuuf] "the plural of death " which is semantically contrary to the goal of such a liberation organization. Consequently, to produce semantically, eye- catching, and more appealing acronyms, the order of the initial letters is reversed to produce [fathH] "conquest". For more examples, see Hamdan and Fareh, 2003; Kanakri, 1999.
- 2 - Acronym formation in Arabic to a certain extent is similar to that in English. However, certain differences exist between the Arabic and English languages. (Ibid:189-190), and there are more differences than similarities in both languages as is evident in the study of Hamdan and Fareh (2003:189-190). Moreover, the morphology, the syllable struc-

ture, the phonotactic rules, word order etc make forcing the mechanisms of acronym formation in English on Arabic invalid and artificial. For example, every syllable in Arabic should begin with a consonant, and no syllable begins with two consonants. Arabic permissible syllable types are: cv, cv:,cvc,cv:c,cvcc,cv:cc. The first four patterns occur initially, medially and finally. The last two are restricted to final position or pausal form.

- 3 - Hamdan and Fareh (2003) attempt to redefine acronyms is unfortunately not adequate, because it is loose and not well constrained. Linguistically speaking it is not preferable as they define acronyms as "The selection of the first letters of the some or all of the constituent words of a phrase that may either be combined together in the same order as that of the source phrase or totally reversed to produce a word that may be pronounced as a whole word or as separate letters (ibid, 2003:191). The shortcomings of this definition are the use of "some" or "all", "either", "or", and may be pronounced as a whole word or as separate letters.

Here, to avoid imposing the English mechanism of forming acronyms on Arabic, I would like to suggest some working principles that can be utilized by linguists, language teachers, organizations and different academic circles. These suggestions are important because as stated before the word structure, the syllable templates, and the Arabic sounds differ in many aspects from the English language. The suggestions are as follows:

- 1 - The number of graphemes that forms the acronyms should not be less than four to avoid ambiguity and overlapping (homonym) with other forms and to make the meaning transparent to audience as in the following examples:
 - [?amal] "Lebanese Resistance Regiment"
 - [Hamaas] "Islamic Resistance Movement"
 - [saabic] "Saudi Basic Industries Company"
- 2 - The acronyms should be restricted to the most common forms which occur more frequently. The new neologism stops being a neologism once it has been accepted and used by the speakers. Some of the important aspects of neologism to become part of the accepted and common vocabulary are: 1) motivation, 2) spreading and institutionalization, 3) a high distribution and frequency, 4) availability (availability refers to the retrieval of words), and 5) productivity (productivity refers to rule - governed word - formation processes which are carried out by the creation and comprehension of new words.) Most of the cited

examples and the examples in the cited works on Arabic in this article clearly show the importance of this point.

- 3 - The acronym should include at least one or two sonorant consonants because in all languages words of such structure have one sonorant sound (vowels, glides, liquids and nasals) as the examples given in this article show.
- 4 - Acronyms should follow the phonotactic rules of the Arabic language in terms of phoneme, syllable structure, arrangements of sounds and the number of syllables as stated above. For example, a conjunction is not considered in forming an acronym, but in some cases avoiding it will result in an ill - formed as in the company's name(TAMCO) "Trading and Maintenance Corporation". Not including the(a) of the conjunction "and" will result in (TMCO) which violates the phonotactic rules of Arabic. For more examples, see Hamdan and Fareh,2003 and Kanak-ri,1999
- 5 - Acronyms should have the ability to derive other forms from them because the Arabic language is considered as a derivational language.
- 6 - It would be much better to follow the Arabic model (?awzaan) of word formation of different syntactic classes.
- 7 - The syllable should play a major rule in forming acronyms. For example, if in forming some acronyms in Arabic such as "majd" for munaḍmat ?al-jabha ?ad - diimuqraṭiyya "Democratic Front Organization", "ḥamas" for "Islamic Resistance movement (Hamdan and Fareh,2003) are formed not as reported in the literature. The vowel [a] is added to avoid two consonants in the onset of the syllable because the syllable template in Arabic is CV(C) (C).
- 8 - Foreign /borrowed acronyms can be used if they follow the rules of the Arabic language such as in radar, laser, UNESCO. However, if such borrowed words violate the rules of the Arabic language, they can be used provided that the form be altered to fit the structure of Arabic.
- 9 - Some forms cannot be considered as proper acronyms as mentioned by some (Abu Salim, 1997, Hamdan and Freh, 2003). For example,- forms which have foreign elements such as [JAMCO] for "Jordan Matches Company" and [JWICO] which is pronounced as [ʔijwayko] for "Jordan Wood Industries" can not be considered true acronyms in Arabic. These forms can be described as hybrid acronyms/blend acronyms because [CO] is taken from the English word "Company".
- 10 - Arabization and assimilation of borrowed acronyms is recommended when possible so that it be acceptable to the Arabic audience and to

facilitate the job of translators as well as teachers. I can foresee the difficulties and the complexity of the issue. The burden of such a difficult task should be the responsibility of academic circles and Arab language academies and centers of translation. The overall picture of different types of borrowing can be represented roughly in the following table which is taken from Antila (1972:156).

	Morphemic im- portation	Morphemic substitution	Sound substi- tution
Loan - word	+	-	+ -
Loan blends	+	+	+
Loanshifts Loan translation Semantic loan	-	+	-
Pronunciation borrowing sound change	- -	- -	+ - + -

For the details and discussion of how adopted and adapted words can be incorporated in the recipient language (Arabic), interested readers can consult Said (1967), Stetkevych (1970), and Mahdin (1996).

5 - Conclusion

To recapitulate and put things into perspective, I will suggest some guidelines which might, if accepted, help us to understand the common types of abbreviations and how to come up with clear and explicit criteria for each type, specifically acronyms.

Acronyms are considered as universal phenomena and their formation should be governed by well-formulated principles based on regularities at the character, phoneme, and word phrase level. In other words, to put things in order, the formation of acronyms should be based on a theoretical background which governs the application of such suggested disciplined mechanism. The advantage that will be gained from having a universal explanatory theory is avoiding the inconsistency and overlapping in terminologies for describing acronyms and related issues. Such inconsistency has lead to difficulties in forming and understanding acronyms as they represent signifi-

cant barriers for understanding specialized texts as well as automatic processing of natural languages. This is evident in a study by Sabkowiak (2008:61-68) of two e-dictionaries. The author concludes that the phonetic treatment of acronyms is haphazard, there is practically no way to access acronyms and abbreviation directly as a lexical category via the search menus, and there are relatively many errors and imperfections on a variety of structural and functional levels.

The following suggestions are based on previous studies as well as the writers point of view:

- 1 - Acronyms are a universal phenomena.
- 2 - The previous arguments indicate that a distinction should be made between the different kinds of abbreviations. Acronyms should be limited to forms that are coined from the initial letters/ sounds of several words or syllable of all or selected words in a series, resulting in a new group of letters that can be pronounced as a word. On the other hand, initialism or alphabetism is restricted to coined forms by taking the initial letters which are pronounced by reciting the individual letters. Other criteria are suggested by Fischer (1998:28).

	Alphabetism	Acronym
Pronunciation	alphabetical	orthoepical
	Stress on the last syllable	stress mainly
	avored vowels [i:], [e] and [ei]	on first syllable
Spelling	one to five letters	three to nine letters
base form	at least two words	at least three words
Productivity		
(new word formation)	rare	restricted
Subject area	mainly science	mainly science, business and politics
Semantics	-	often homonymy

- 3 - Acronyms with higher pronunciability are preferred.
- 4 - Short acronyms are less preferred.
- 5 - In addition to language universal acronym formation, there should be language specific mechanisms to cater for special cases in languages which differ from English at all levels like the Arabic language as indicated before.

- 5 - The formation of all kinds of abbreviations can be considered as non-

- morphematic processes; that is they differ from proper word-formation processes as explained in the introduction.
- 6 - The writing system as well as word order should be observed in forming acronyms.
 - 7 - The general taxonomy with sub-classes for acronyms and related phenomena should be recognized according to well-established criteria.
 - 8 - Conflict between multiple ambiguous acronyms should be avoided.
 - 9 - A massive number of acronyms in daily communication and special jargons of different fields can be called acronym communication because only people from within the organization understand what they are talking about.

In view of the unorthodox structure of acronyms, there is a need for a more flexible approach to cater for their apparent irregularity. Moreover, in dealing with acronyms, sometimes, one needs to go beyond a structural analysis and take usage-related aspects into account (see Stojicic,2004; it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss non - structural factors).

Finally, further studies are necessary to put things in order. The hope is that this study will contribute some insights which can be helpful to those interested in codifying and enlarging the acronym formation process. It is a fact that frequency and the spread of using acronyms by speakers of languages for many reasons make acronyms more popular than their full forms. This may result in lexicalization and become the base form word-formation process. Also, it may shed light on lexicology and lexical theory, and the dynamic relations between writing and speech.

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