

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ABBREVIATIONS IN THE MEDIA DOMAIN

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses issues of transforming previous approaches and perceptions about language and its use in the field of media linguistics, in particular, the linguistic peculiarities of abbreviations. The dominant linguistic units in the media domain have been considered as slang manifestations and studied as a sublayer of language, which characterizes the communication process in the media domain, since the abbreviations used dictate unique and multi-genre models of communication, along with synchronous and asynchronous communication types. Contrary to the opinions that communication in the media domain is inanimate by nature, and the identity of a person cannot be perceived, the article substantiates that by examining the choice of linguistic and non-linguistic means made by individuals, it is possible to form an idea about their socio-cultural affiliation. The belief was expressed that from the point of view of media linguistics, media consumers are expected to activate epistemic and cognitive mechanisms, since the synchronous and asynchronous communication models existing in the media require a strategy of using widely spread abbreviations. It was revealed that the media literacy and media culture of media consumers are of primary importance. It is a set of factors requiring certain knowledge, by which users are guided when using any emoticon or abbreviation. Abbreviations, along with communicative acts, can be decisive in revealing the identity of an individual. We have come to the conclusion that they not only fill the gap in paralinguistic means, but also have sociolinguistic value.

Keywords: *media domain, media linguistics, media literacy, media culture, synchronic, asynchronous, language, discourse, structures, media consumer, paralinguistic features, abbreviations, emoticons.*

INTRODUCTION

The creation and active circulation of various abbreviations in the media field is a well-known fact, which is due to their being components of various types of synchronous and asynchronous communication. In the media domain, abbreviations cannot be considered new in terms of formation, since they are created according to certain established rules (Crystal, 2004).

Abbreviations have been an integral part of written speech and have been used in both printed and handwritten texts (Aghajanyan, 2013). In the media domain their sociolinguistic function becomes predominant.

Based on the studies conducted, we can say that media communication, like face-to-face communication, is distinguished by creating certain rules for various relationships, where the cultural identity of communicators is revealed. Studying the peculiarities of media discussions, Thurlow and Brown distinguish between various criteria, where the priority is given to the brevity of messages. Next, the use of content units and punctuation, the distortion of spelling norms, as well as the widespread presence of abbreviations with the aim of filling the gap in paralinguistic means are considered (Thurlow & Brown, 2003).

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of an integrated approach to the investigation of shortenings and abbreviations in contemporary digital media discourse, combining their structural-semantic and communicative analysis with data on students' recognition and interpretation of these linguistic units. This approach makes it possible to distinguish established and widely comprehensible abbreviated forms from newly emerging, non-standard forms requiring context-dependent interpretation, and to identify their role in enhancing the effectiveness of contemporary media communication.

MATERIALS

The empirical material for the present study was collected over a six-month research period and comprised two interconnected components: student-based data and authentic examples of contemporary media communication.

The first component involved 168 undergraduate students enrolled in pedagogical education programmes. The participants were first-, second-, and third-year Bachelor's degree students. Their participation made it possible to examine prospective teachers' recognition, interpretation, and use of abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, and acronyms, as well as their familiarity with abbreviated forms commonly encountered in contemporary digital communication.

The second component consisted of a corpus of authentic media discourse. During the six-month research period, 300 comments containing or referring to abbreviated linguistic forms were collected and analyzed. The material was drawn from eight online news websites and three widely used digital platforms: YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. These sources were selected because they represent diverse forms of contemporary media communication and provide opportunities to examine abbreviated forms across relatively formal and informal communicative settings and predominantly asynchronous forms of digital interaction.

The corpus included lexical shortenings, initialisms, acronyms, and other emerging abbreviated forms used by media users. Particular attention was given to linguistic units characterized by structural reduction, semantic ambiguity, contextual variability, or limited conventionalization. Examples were

included when their interpretation depended on knowledge of media-specific communicative conventions or on the broader linguistic and situational context.

The collected material was analyzed according to several criteria: (1) structural formation, including the reduction of initial, medial, or final parts of words; (2) morphological characteristics; (3) semantic meaning and potential ambiguity; (4) contextual interpretation; and (5) communicative function, including linguistic economy, expressiveness, euphemization, emotional evaluation, and group identification.

The combination of student-based data and authentic media material made it possible to examine both the linguistic characteristics of abbreviated forms and the extent to which prospective teachers recognize and interpret them. The resulting corpus provided a basis for examining abbreviations and acronyms as dynamic linguistic units shaped by the communicative demands, conventions, and interactional practices of contemporary digital media discourse.

The analysis of the student data also indicated that familiarity with abbreviated forms is an important aspect of effective communication in contemporary media environments. This is particularly relevant because abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, and acronyms have become increasingly widespread in digital media communication, while a considerable proportion of newly emerging forms may be unfamiliar to users and may require contextual knowledge for accurate interpretation. Accordingly, the study of the linguistic features of emerging abbreviated forms requires attention not only to their structural characteristics but also to the conditions under which their meanings are recognized and interpreted by media users.

One of the characteristic features of contemporary media communication is the need for linguistic economy, particularly in environments where communication is constrained by message length, time, or the rapid exchange of information. Such conditions contribute to the active use of abbreviations and acronyms (Madoyan, 2016). Recent research in this area suggests that abbreviated forms are particularly relevant to digital communication, where successful interpretation may depend on users' familiarity with established media conventions and their ability to infer meaning from the immediate linguistic and situational context. Thus, the increasing use of abbreviated forms reflects not only structural processes of linguistic economy but also the evolving communicative practices of contemporary digital media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative linguistic analysis with quantitative analysis of empirical data. This approach was adopted to investigate the structural, morphological, semantic, and communicative characteristics of abbreviations and acronyms in contemporary media discourse, as well as the extent to which these linguistic units are recognized, interpreted, and used by undergraduate students enrolled in pedagogical education programmes.

The study was designed to examine abbreviated linguistic forms as dynamic elements of contemporary media communication, taking into account both their formal characteristics and their

contextual and communicative functions. Particular attention was paid to the relationship between the structural reduction of linguistic units and their semantic transparency, contextual dependence, and accessibility to media users.

The study involved 168 undergraduate students enrolled in pedagogical education programmes. The participants were first-, second-, and third-year Bachelor's degree students. Their participation provided an opportunity to examine prospective teachers' familiarity with abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, and acronyms commonly encountered in contemporary media communication.

The student component of the study focused on participants' ability to recognize, understand, interpret, and use abbreviated linguistic forms. The data obtained from the participants were subsequently considered in relation to the abbreviated forms identified in the authentic media corpus.

The empirical data were collected over a six-month period. The research corpus consisted of 300 authentic media comments containing abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, acronyms, or other abbreviated linguistic forms.

The material was collected from eight online news websites and three widely used digital media platforms: YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. The selection of different media sources enabled the study to examine abbreviated forms across diverse communicative environments, including relatively formal and informal media discourse and predominantly asynchronous forms of digital interaction.

The corpus included both conventionalized abbreviated forms and emerging or non-standard forms whose interpretation depended on contextual and pragmatic knowledge. Particular attention was given to forms characterized by structural reduction, semantic ambiguity, contextual variability, limited conventionalization, or platform-specific usage.

For the purposes of the study, abbreviations and acronyms were examined as related but distinguishable categories of reduced linguistic forms. The classification was based primarily on their structural formation, degree of conventionalization, and pronunciation.

Abbreviations were understood broadly as shortened linguistic forms resulting from the reduction of a word or multi-word expression. Acronyms and initialisms were treated as forms created from the initial letters or parts of a sequence of words, with a distinction made between forms pronounced as a lexical word and those pronounced letter by letter. Conventional examples include *GIF* (*Graphics Interchange Format*), *PIN* (*Personal Identification Number*), and *radar* (*radio detection and ranging*), while forms such as *Prof.* for *professor* illustrate conventional word shortening.

The analysis of the corpus identified three principal structural patterns of shortening:

1. Reduction of the initial part of a word or expression, as in *u* (*you*) and *ur* (*your/you're*), depending on the communicative context;
2. Reduction of the medial part, as in *pls* (*please*);
3. Reduction of the final part, as in *bro* (*brother*).

In addition to these patterns, the analysis considered initialisms, acronyms, and multi-word abbreviated expressions occurring in digital media communication.

ANALYTICAL CRITERIA AND METHODS

The collected material was analyzed according to a set of complementary linguistic and communicative criteria.

1. Structural analysis. Structural analysis was used to identify the mechanisms through which abbreviated forms are created, including the reduction of initial, medial, or final segments of words and the formation of abbreviated expressions from initial letters or parts of multi-word units.
2. Morphological analysis. Morphological analysis examined which linguistic elements were omitted, reduced, or combined in the formation of abbreviated forms. Particular attention was given to the extent to which morphological compression affected the recognizability and interpretation of the original expression.
3. Semantic analysis. Semantic analysis was applied to determine the relationship between abbreviated forms and their corresponding full forms and to identify cases of semantic ambiguity, polysemy, semantic extension, or context-dependent interpretation.
4. Contextual and discourse analysis. Contextual and discourse analysis was used to determine how the meaning and function of abbreviated forms were influenced by the immediate linguistic environment, communicative situation, media platform, and relationship between interlocutors. This approach was particularly relevant to newly emerging and non-standard forms whose meanings could not be established solely from their formal structure.
5. Functional analysis. The communicative functions of abbreviated forms were examined with reference to linguistic economy, acceleration of information exchange, expressiveness, emotional and evaluative meaning, euphemization or mitigation of potentially offensive expressions, and group identification. As previously noted in linguistic research, the function of an abbreviation may vary according to its communicative purpose and context (Aghajanyan, 2013).
6. Comparative analysis. Comparative analysis was used to distinguish conventionalized and widely recognizable abbreviated forms from newly emerging, non-standard, or context-dependent forms. This made it possible to assess differences in semantic transparency and interpretive accessibility.
7. Quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis was applied to determine the frequency and distribution of different types of abbreviated forms within the 300-comment corpus. The quantitative component was also used to assess patterns in students' recognition and interpretation of the identified linguistic units.

ASSESSMENT OF RECOGNITION AND INTERPRETATION

The student component was analyzed in relation to the abbreviated forms identified in the media corpus. Particular attention was paid to participants' ability to recognize the abbreviated form, identify or

infer its full meaning, interpret it within its communicative context, and distinguish conventional forms from newly emerging or non-standard forms.

The combination of authentic media data and student-based data enabled the study to examine abbreviated linguistic forms from both production and reception perspectives. Thus, the methodology considered not only how abbreviations are structurally and functionally formed and used in contemporary media discourse but also how successfully prospective teachers recognize and interpret such forms.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The research was conducted in several successive stages. First, relevant theoretical and methodological literature on abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, and acronyms was reviewed to establish the conceptual and analytical framework of the study. Second, an empirical corpus was compiled from eight online news websites and the digital platforms YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Third, 300 comments containing relevant abbreviated linguistic forms were selected and classified according to their structural and linguistic characteristics. Fourth, the identified forms were analyzed using structural, morphological, semantic, contextual, discourse, functional, and comparative methods. Finally, the linguistic findings were considered in relation to the data obtained from the 168 undergraduate students concerning their recognition and interpretation of abbreviated forms.

The application of these complementary methods provided an integrated framework for examining abbreviations and acronyms as dynamic linguistic units shaped by processes of linguistic economy, contextual interpretation, communicative purpose, and the evolving conventions of contemporary digital media discourse.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate that abbreviations constitute an important and increasingly productive resource in contemporary digital media communication. Their widespread use can be associated with the communicative demands of digital environments, particularly the need for linguistic economy, rapid information exchange, and the efficient transmission of meaning. In this respect, media abbreviations function not merely as reduced linguistic forms but also as additional communicative resources that enable users to convey information, attitudes, and interpersonal meanings in a highly condensed form. Conventional examples such as *YAM* (*yet another meeting*) and *LOL* (*laughing out loud*) demonstrate how abbreviated forms can efficiently encode frequently recurring expressions and communicative reactions.

The findings further demonstrate that abbreviation in contemporary media discourse extends beyond the reduction of individual words or initial letters. Multi-word expressions and, in some cases, entire communicative propositions may be represented through abbreviated forms. For example, *TTYL* (*talk to you later*) functions as a condensed form of a complete conversational expression and performs a clearly

interpersonal and pragmatic function. Similarly, *tbh* (*to be honest*) can be regarded as a metacommunicative abbreviation because it signals the speaker's communicative stance toward the proposition that follows or precedes it. The example "*This song deep as hell tbh*" illustrates how an abbreviated form can contribute not only to linguistic economy but also to the expression of the speaker's attitude and degree of sincerity.

These findings support the view that abbreviations in digital media should be examined in relation to their communicative and pragmatic functions rather than solely in terms of their formal structure. Their meaning is frequently determined by the communicative context, the relationship between interlocutors, and the conventions shared by members of a particular digital community. Consequently, the interpretation of an abbreviation may not always be possible through its formal expansion alone.

The polysemy and contextual dependence of abbreviations represent another significant characteristic identified in the study. The same abbreviated form may acquire different meanings in different communicative situations, making contextual indicators essential for accurate interpretation. For example, *TC* may represent *take care* and function as an informal expression of farewell or goodwill. In the following exchange:

"Hey, Eric. Do you have any plans for 2nite?"

"Why are u asking?"

"How about watching a movie 2nite?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't. I'll be with my family for dinner."

"OK. Maybe another time."

"Maybe. TC. CU." the forms *2nite* (*tonight*), *u* (*you*), *TC* (*take care*), and *CU* (*see you*) demonstrate several distinct functions of abbreviated communication. The forms *u* and *2nite* primarily contribute to linguistic economy, whereas *TC* and *CU* perform interpersonal and phatic functions by expressing goodwill and closing the interaction. Thus, the communicative value of these forms cannot be adequately explained by their structural reduction alone.

The analysis also suggests that abbreviated forms may contribute to the development of shared communicative conventions within digital communities. Conventional abbreviations such as *LOL*, *TTYL*, and *tbh* are relatively transparent to experienced users and can therefore facilitate rapid communication. In contrast, newly emerging, non-standard, or highly context-dependent forms may increase the interpretive burden placed on recipients. This distinction is particularly important in relation to prospective teachers, whose familiarity with contemporary digital language may influence their ability to interpret the linguistic practices encountered by students in media and online communication.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between abbreviation and semantic accessibility. Structural compression may increase communicative efficiency while simultaneously reducing the transparency of meaning. This is especially evident in abbreviations formed from multi-word expressions, where several lexical and morphological elements may be omitted. Forms such as *JFFI* (*just fucking Facebook it*) and *NOYC* (*none of your concern*) illustrate the extent to which digital

users may compress an entire expression into a sequence that is difficult to interpret without prior familiarity with the convention. In such cases, contextual knowledge becomes a decisive factor in reconstructing the intended meaning.

The study also identified pragmatic uses of abbreviations in the expression or mitigation of emotionally marked and potentially offensive language. Abbreviating a vulgar expression may conceal part of its explicit lexical form while retaining its evaluative or emotional force. For example, *WTF* (*what the fuck*) can function as an expression of surprise, irritation, or disbelief, depending on the context. Its abbreviated form may therefore serve both a linguistic-economy function and a pragmatic function associated with the mitigation or indirect presentation of taboo language. The interpretation of such forms is nevertheless highly context-dependent, and alternative expansions may occasionally be inferred by users who are unfamiliar with the conventional meaning.

The corpus further demonstrates that abbreviated forms may be used to express negative evaluation and emotional attitudes. Forms such as *pos* (*piece of shit*) illustrate how abbreviation can condense strongly evaluative language while preserving its pragmatic force. Such cases indicate that abbreviations are not semantically neutral devices: they may encode the speaker's emotional stance, interpersonal attitude, and evaluation of a person, event, or object. Their interpretation therefore requires consideration of both linguistic form and discourse context.

The findings concerning forms such as *fag* also illustrate the potential ambiguity of shortened or abbreviated expressions. Depending on the context, the same form may carry different meanings, including offensive or derogatory interpretations, while in other contexts it may represent an entirely different lexical expression. This demonstrates that formal decoding alone is insufficient for determining meaning in contemporary digital discourse. Contextual, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge may be required to distinguish among possible interpretations.

The findings are consistent with the observation that different types of abbreviations perform different communicative functions depending on their contextual purpose (Aghajanyan, 2013). At the same time, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that contemporary digital media has created conditions for the rapid emergence, modification, and conventionalization of abbreviated forms. Some forms may become sufficiently established to enter dictionaries and specialized reference resources, whereas others remain platform-specific, community-specific, or highly ephemeral.

The results also highlight the importance of distinguishing between conventionalized and emerging abbreviations. Conventional forms are generally easier to recognize and interpret because their meanings are shared by a broader community of users. Emerging forms, by contrast, may require inferential processing and knowledge of specific communicative practices. This distinction has particular relevance for media literacy and teacher education, as prospective teachers increasingly encounter students whose everyday communication is influenced by digital linguistic practices.

Overall, the discussion confirms that abbreviations and acronyms in contemporary media communication should be viewed as dynamic linguistic phenomena located at the intersection of

structural reduction, semantic change, pragmatic meaning, and digital communicative practice. Their use reflects the principle of linguistic economy, but it also serves broader functions, including interpersonal communication, emotional expression, evaluation, euphemization, group identification, and discourse management. At the same time, the increasing diversity and contextual dependence of abbreviated forms may create challenges for users who lack familiarity with particular digital conventions.

The combination of the linguistic corpus and student-based data therefore provides evidence that successful interpretation of contemporary media abbreviations depends not only on knowledge of their conventional expansions but also on the ability to infer meaning from context. This finding underscores the need to consider digital abbreviated language as an integral component of contemporary media literacy and communicative competence, particularly in the education of future teachers.

RESULTS

The language of synchronous media communication can be difficult to use for media consumers who have not yet mastered the media domain.

During synchronous media communication, new abbreviations appear, displacing rarely used ones. Let us add that by examining the factual material extracted from synchronous discussions, it is possible to reveal the level of media literacy of communicators, the fact of their awareness of Internet neologisms. For example, the abbreviation *wc* /*wrong conversation*// *web camera*/ used in the phrase *hi wc kimmmy* can lead to misunderstanding, as it is ambiguous. Especially when media consumers do not use any punctuation marks, it is unclear whether the statement is interrogative or affirmative. In another example, we see that the abbreviation *WGO* /*what's going on*/ is used without a question mark, but it was discovered that it is also missing in online dictionaries. Therefore, we can state that in the case of Internet abbreviations, the question mark is not mandatory. For example: /*hello, how r u 4:47:am. I'm good hru 4:47:am*/. It is obvious that in simultaneous communication, users used both abbreviations and acronyms. The first user shortened the first and last part of the verb, the pronoun, and what is most characteristic, both users avoided punctuation marks.

In summary, let us state that abbreviations are one of the most effective means of language economy. This linguistic unit is a significant part of media discussions and communication. In some cases abbreviations are also used to emphasize various nuances of oral speech. Let us add that the widespread use of media technologies could not but have an impact on the process of forming new communication formats, stimulating the research interests of linguists, educators and psychologists. We have also found out that Internet communication is in a dynamic development stage and has distinct rules and communication strategies. Judgements that there are no socio-psychological indicators in media communication are wrong. As our study shows, now those who communicate in the media domain attach particular importance to contextual indicators. In other words, those communicating in the media domain, due to their psychological make-up, the nature and purpose of communication, media literacy and media culture awareness, have their unique characteristics of self-expression.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study demonstrates that abbreviations, shortenings, initialisms, acronyms, and other reduced linguistic forms constitute an important and dynamic component of contemporary media communication. Their analysis cannot be limited to their structural characteristics alone, since their meaning, interpretation, and communicative value are closely connected with the specific linguistic, social, and digital contexts in which they occur.

The empirical material collected during the six-month research period made it possible to examine abbreviated forms across different types of contemporary media communication. The analysis of 300 comments collected from eight online news websites and the digital platforms YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook provided a basis for identifying the structural diversity, semantic characteristics, contextual variability, and communicative functions of abbreviated linguistic units. At the same time, the inclusion of 168 undergraduate students receiving pedagogical education made it possible to consider the issue not only from a linguistic perspective but also in relation to the recognition, interpretation, and use of such forms by contemporary media users and prospective teachers.

The findings of the study support the conclusion that abbreviated linguistic units perform several important functions in digital media discourse. In addition to contributing to linguistic economy and the reduction of communicative effort, they may serve expressive, evaluative, emotional, euphemistic, intensifying, and group-identifying purposes. Thus, abbreviation in contemporary media should be regarded not merely as a process of linguistic shortening but also as a communicative strategy shaped by the needs and conventions of particular discourse communities.

The analysis also highlights the importance of contextual dependence in the interpretation of abbreviated forms. While conventional and widely established abbreviations may be easily recognized and decoded, newly emerging, non-standard, or context-specific forms may create difficulties in interpretation. Their understanding often requires familiarity not only with the linguistic structure of the unit but also with the communicative situation, media environment, shared cultural knowledge, and conventions of a particular online community.

The comparison of authentic media material with student-based data further emphasizes the relevance of media and linguistic competence in contemporary education. The ability to recognize and correctly interpret abbreviations and acronyms is increasingly connected with broader skills of media literacy, critical reading, contextual interpretation, and effective participation in digital communication. For prospective teachers in particular, familiarity with contemporary abbreviated forms may contribute to a better understanding of the linguistic practices of young people and the changing nature of communication in digital environments.

Overall, the study confirms that abbreviations and acronyms in contemporary media discourse should be investigated as multidimensional linguistic units characterized by structural variability, semantic flexibility, contextual dependence, and diverse communicative functions. The mixed-methods

approach employed in the research provides an opportunity to combine linguistic analysis with the examination of users' recognition and interpretation of abbreviated forms.

The study also suggests the need for further research based on larger and more diverse corpora, different age and professional groups, and comparative analysis of abbreviations across languages and media platforms. Such research may contribute to a deeper understanding of the ongoing development of abbreviated language and its role in shaping contemporary digital communication.

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