



## THE USE OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS IN ENGLISH

**G'aniyeva Barchinoy Bahrom qizi**

[ganiyevabarchinoy1@gmail.com](mailto:ganiyevabarchinoy1@gmail.com)

Faculty of English Philology Teaching, Uzbekistan  
State World Languages University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

**Shamsiddinova Dilafruz**

Supervisor:

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**Abstract:** Learning acronyms and abbreviations is extremely beneficial when learning English since they are an element of colloquial English. People are used by English speakers when they write essays, play games, send emails, and occasionally participate in conversations. They usually work to save time.

**Keywords:** abbreviation, acronyms, shortenings, meanings

### Introduction

Definitions of acronyms and abbreviations

According to the Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language edited by McArthur( 1998 1, 8), a condensation is the" shortening of words and expressions" whereas an acronym" is an condensation from the first letters of a series of words and pronounced as one.". According to his description, the two are different in that the former is spoken as individual letters of the alphabet, whilst the ultimate is pronounced as a single word, similar to WAR( Women Against Force) and ATM( Automated Teller Machine), independently. The notion of acronyms is further clarified by Yule( 1996 68), who writes

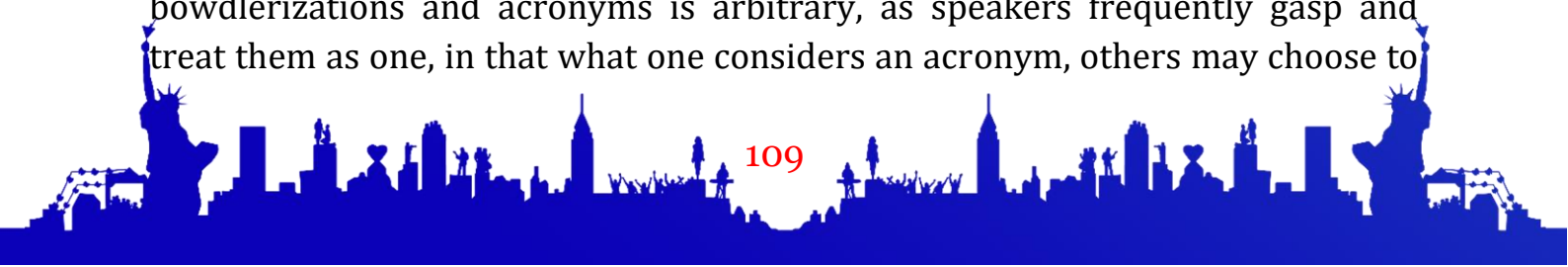
Acronyms are formed from the original letters of a set of words. These can remain basically' alphabetisms' similar to CD(' compact fragment'), where the pronunciation consists of a set of letters. Further, generally, acronyms are pronounced as single words, as in NATO, NASA, or UNESCO.

Landau (1989: 27), on the other hand, attempts to make a clear distinction between abbreviations and acronyms when he states:

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase, consisting of the word or the first letter of each of the words in the phrase, or sometimes the first two letters.

An acronym is a form of abbreviation composed of the first or the first two letters or a syllable from each of the words in a compound term or phrase, so ordered that the resulting series of letters is usually pronounced as a word.

Landau( 1989 27) further notes that occasionally, the distinction between bowdlerizations and acronyms is arbitrary, as speakers frequently gasp and treat them as one, in that what one considers an acronym, others may choose to





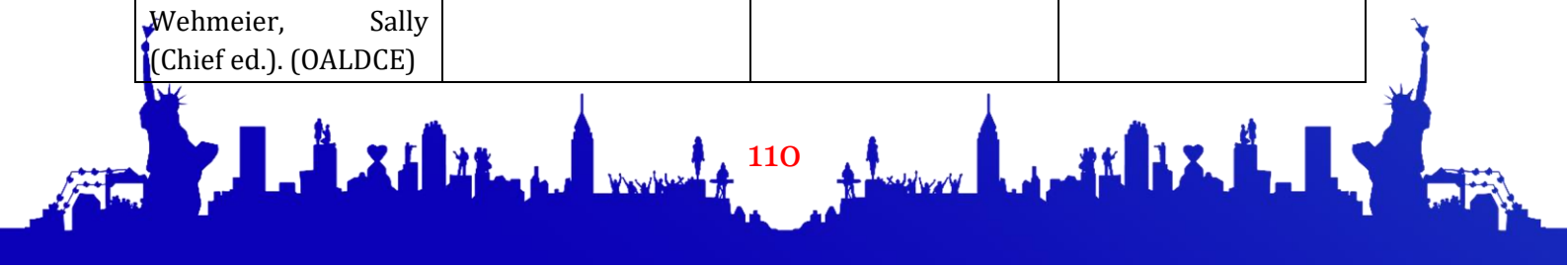
spell out the individual letters, therefore making it a condensation or alphabetism as well. He cites the acronym Truant( absent without leave), which some speakers gasp as a word, making it an acronym, while others gasp it as a sequence of letters, in which case it's a condensation. In this paper, however, we borrow Landau's( 1989) description of the two terms, condensation and acronym. The terms alphabetisms or initialisms will not be used.

**English Dictionaries**

Altogether, ten named English wordbooks were surveyed, looking at whether bowdlerizations and acronyms are included in these wordbooks and, if so, how they're represented. The following table gives the results of the check:

**Table 1: Abbreviations and acronyms in selected English dictionaries**

<b>Dictionary</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Acronyms/ Abbreviations</b>
The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary. Morehead, Albert and Loy Morehead (Eds.) (NAWHCD)	1981	Monolingual	Yes, a list of abbreviations and acronyms is given separately as a back matter text
The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. Sykes, J.B. (Ed.). (CODCE)	1982	Monolingual	Yes, listed as part of the lexicon/lemmatised in the macrostructure
Collins Concise Dictionary (4th Edition). (CCD)	1999	Monolingual	Yes, listed as part of the lexicon/lemmatised in the macrostructure
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. New Edition. (LDCE)	1987	Monolingual	Yes, as part of the lexicon/lemmatised in the macrostructure
Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture. (LDELIC)	1998	Monolingual	Yes, listed as part of the lexicon/lemmatised in the macrostructure
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. Hornby, A.S. (7 <sup>th</sup> Edition). Wehmeier, Sally (Chief ed.). (OALDCE)	2005	Monolingual	Yes, as part of the lexicon/lemmatised in the macrostructure





Six of the ten English wordbooks list bowdlerizations and acronyms in the macrostructure as part of the vocabulary, while one includes them in a list as a background textbook. In seven of the below wordbooks, an intriguing observation can be made regarding the phonological representation of these bowdlerizations and

acronyms in the wordbook. In six of these wordbooks, the pronunciation of the acronyms and bowdlerizations is given using IPA symbols( International Phonetic Alphabet), and these abstracts are also marked for stress. Acronyms, which are pronounced as the spelling suggests, are marked for primary stress only, which is the strongest type, while bowdlerizations carry both primary stress represented with a high mark() and secondary stress( less prominent) represented with a low mark(), as illustrated below.

**Abbreviations:**

FBI abbrev. /efbi:a/ ... for the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the police department in the US which is controlled by the national government and which deals with serious crimes that involve people or places in more than one of the states in the US ... (LDELIC, p. 472)

PX /pi:eks/ ...abbreviation for post exchange ... (LDELIC, p. 1089)

BA /bi:ei/ ... abbreviation for Bachelor of Arts .... (CIDE, p. 88)

UAE /ju:ei:/ ... abbreviation for United Arab Emirates (CIDE, p. 1577)

CBS /si:bi: es/ abbr (in the USA) Columbia Broadcasting System: a CBS news

broadcast: to CBS (OALDCE, p. 235)

**Acronyms:**

UNICEF /ju:nsef/ n ... abbreviation for United Nations International Children's Fund (CIDE, p. 1589)

ACAS /eks/ abbr (in Britain) Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (an organization that helps with negotiation during industrial disputes) (OALDCE, p. 7)

NASA /ns/ (in the USA) National Aeronautics and Space Administration (OALDCE, p. 1013)

UNESCO /ju:nesk/ abbr United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (OALDCE, p. 1670)

OPEC /pek/ n [the] Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries; a group of countries that produce oil and plan together how to sell it ... (OALDCE, p. 1062)





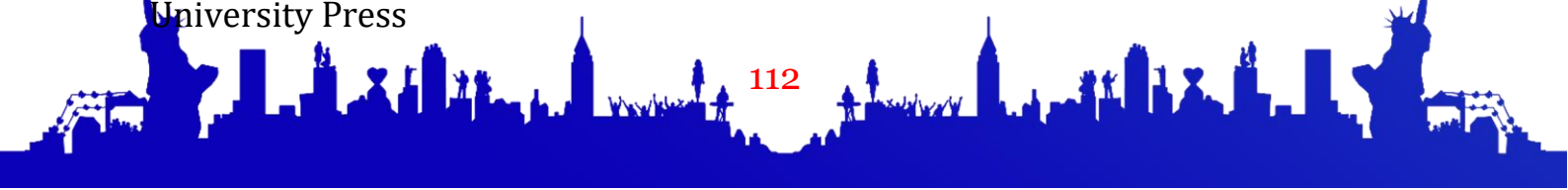
Bowdlerizations, on the one hand, are considered complex' words'; hence, they're pronounced for both primary and secondary stress. It seems that acronyms, on the other hand, are phonologically considered to be simple' words' and carry alcohol or primary stress. Both aphoristic and disyllabic acronyms carry primary stress on the first syllable, while polysyllabic bones can carry stress either on the first or alternate syllable, as indicated over. Still, some exceptions to the below treatment include The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary( Albert and Loy Morehead 1981), the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus( Waite 2007), and the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English( Sykes 1982). The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary( 1981) provides a separate list of bowdlerizations and acronyms at the end of the wordbook as a back textbook, while the ultimate two indicate the pronunciation of acronyms by way of orthographic rewriting, and none at all for bowdlerizations.

### **Conclusion**

From the dictionaries surveyed above, we conclude that all the English dictionaries in the survey include abbreviations and acronyms in their lemma list. They are considered part of the lexicon as they are lemmatised in alphabetical order with all the other lemmas.

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