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## INITIALISMS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH SLANG

*The present article focuses on investigating the phenomenon of initialisms in the 21<sup>st</sup> c. English slang. In the light of the miscellany of diverse structural modifications of capitalized shortenings, the modern approach to understanding initialisms as shortenings produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to its initial letters proves to be somewhat faulty. Therefore, the notion of a graphic initialism, defined as a lexical item consisting of prototypically uppercase letters which may (not) represent the initial letters of its semantic or asemantic components, is introduced to serve as an umbrella term embracing both initialisms proper and pseudo-initialisms. Depending on the linguistic status of the derivational base involved in the formation of the neologism, the initialisms under study are categorized into three types: deproposemic, dephrasal, and delexical. Of the 181 slang neologisms analyzed, the dephrasal initialisms numerically prevail over the deproposemic and delexical ones, the ratio being 72.9% to 17.7% to 9.4% respectively. The overwhelming majority of the dephrasal initialisms are based on substantival phrases (66.3%), whereas the coinages based on adverbial (2.8%), adjectival (1.6%), verbal (1.6%), and pronominal (0.6%) phrases prove to be fairly sparse. Approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the deproposemic items under study tend to derive from elliptical sentences (10.5%), whereas nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  derive from complete imperative and declarative sentences (7.2%). The delexical initialisms derive from compounds, including classical ones. In view of the fact that, on the one hand, even morphemes within compounds can be reduced to their initials, whereas, on the other, certain functional words may be omitted in dephrasal and deproposemic items, an initialism proper may be redefined as a shortening produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to the initial letters of its sublexical (morphemic or morphoid), lexical, or superlexical (with one or more functional words missing) components. Furthermore, initialisms proper are to be distinguished from pseudo-initialisms formed from simplices or derivatives and shortened at random, the letters retained being further capitalized regardless of their position (initial, medial, or final) in the derivational base.*

**Key words:** *initialism, dephrasal initialism, deproposemic initialism, delexical initialism, graphic initialism, initialism proper, pseudo-initialism.*

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## ІНІЦІАЛЬНІ АБРЕВІАТУРИ В СЛЕНГУ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ХХІ СТОЛІТТЯ

*Стаття присвячена проблемі дослідження явища ініціальної абрєвіації в сленгу англійської мови початку ХХІ сторіччя. У світлі розмаїття різних структурних модифікацій капіталізованих скорочень сучасний підхід до розуміння ініціальних абрєвіатур як скорочення композита, словосполучення або речення до рівня початкових літер його компонентів виявляється не зовсім коректним. Відтак, введено поняття графічної ініціальної абрєвіатури, яку визначаємо як лексичну одиницю, що прототипно складається з літер верхнього регістру, які можуть представляти або не представляти початкові літери її семантичних або асемантичних компонентів. Графічна ініціальна абрєвіатура об'єднує у своєму складі власне ініціальні абрєвіатури та псевдоініціальні абрєвіатури. З огляду на лінгвістичний статус твірної основи неологізма, усі зібрані одиниці поділяємо на 3 типи: відпропоземні, відфраземні та відлексемні. Із-поміж 181 проаналізованого неосленгізма відфраземні ініціальні абрєвіатури кількісно переважають відпропоземні та відлексемні у відношенні 72,9% до 17,7% до 9,4% відповідно. Відфразові ініціальні абрєвіатури в абсолютній своїй більшості походять від іменникових словосполучень (66,3%), у край рідко – від прислівникових (2,8%), прикметникових (1,6%), дієслівних (1,6%) та займенникових (0,6%). Близько  $\frac{2}{3}$  досліджуваних відпропоземних одиниць творяться на основі неповних речень (10,5%), тоді як  $\frac{1}{3}$  зазнали синтаксичної деривації від повних наказових та розповідних речень (7,2%). Відлексемні ініціальні абрєвіатури походять від композитів, у тому числі класичних. Ураховуючи той факт, що, з одного боку, навіть морфеми у складі композитів можуть скорочуватися до своїх початкових літер, а, з іншого, деякі функціональні*

слова можуть упускатися при акронімізації відфраземних або відпропоземних одиниць, власне ініціальну аббревіатуру можна визначити як скорочення композита, словосполучення або речення до рівня перших літер його сублексичних (морфемних або морфоїдних), лексичних або суперлексичних (із пропуском одного або більше функціональних слів) компонентів. Крім того, власні ініціальні аббревіатури потрібно відрізняти від псевдоініціальних, які творяться на основі простих або похідних слів і зазнають скорочення у довільному порядку з подальшою капіталізацією літер у кінцевій одиниці безвідносно до їхньої позиції (початкової, середньої чи кінцевої) у твірній основі.

**Ключові слова:** ініціальна аббревіатура, відфраземна ініціальна аббревіатура, відпропоземна ініціальна аббревіатура, відлексемна ініціальна аббревіатура, графічна ініціальна аббревіатура, власне ініціальна аббревіатура, псевдоініціальна аббревіатура.

**Introduction.** Human communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is seen as becoming more and more digitalized as a concomitant to significant IT breakthroughs, which, in turn, results in the compression of meaning in linearly less extended linguistic forms. For reasons of economy, words, word groups, and sentences are constantly shortened so as to convey maximum information within minimum time in oral speech or within minimum space in writing. It is this characteristic that makes shortenings, which manifest lexical and/or syntactic redundancy (Borys, 2021: 16), an invariably highly productive word-formation mechanism.

In English linguistics, shortenings produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to its initial letters are known by several names: *abbreviations* (Plag, 2003: 126); *acronyms* (Adams, 1987: 136-137; Algeo, 2010: 236; Fandrych, 2008: 111; Gary Miller, 2014: 148; Kreidler, 1979: 3-6; Mattiello, 2013: 83; Minkova & Stockwell, 2009: 16-17; Plag, 2003: 127); *acrophones* (Bussmann, 2006: 13); *alphabetisms* (Algeo, 2010: 236; Gary Miller, 2014: 147; Mattiello, 2013: 82); *initialisms* (Algeo, 2010: 236; Denning, Kessler & Leben, 2007: 59-60; Mattiello, 2013: 83; Minkova & Stockwell, 2009: 16-17; Pearce, 2007: 1; Plag, 2003: 127). The function of the umbrella term embracing all shortenings restricted to initials may be performed by the:

- 1) *abbreviation* (Pearce, 2007: 1; Plag, 2003: 127);
- 2) *acronym* (Adams, 1987: 136-137; Bussmann, 2006: 13; Fandrych, 2008: 111; Kreidler, 1979: 3-6);
- 3) *alphabetism* (Gary Miller, 2014: 147; Mattiello, 2013: 82);
- 4) *initialism* (Bauer & Huddleston, 2002: 1632; Denning, Kessler & Leben, 2007: 59-60).

Of the four terms regarded as generic by diverse scholars, the *initialism* appears to be the most etymologically unambiguous one since it is the initial letters that are retained in each of the lexical constituents of the base expression. The *abbreviation* proves to be merely the Latin version of the English umbrella term *shortening* (Borys, 2018: 2), since the Ecclesiastical Latin *abbreviatiō* is derived from the Latin words *ad* 'toward' and *breviō* 'I shorten'.

The *acronym* has two faults. Firstly, it is frequently taken to designate only one type of initialisms – those pronounced as regular words (Brinton & Brinton, 2010: 109-110; Mattiello, 2013: 83; Minkova & Stockwell, 2009: 16-17; Pearce, 2007: 1; Plag, 2003: 127) – as opposed to those pronounced letter by letter. Secondly, the term may alternatively denote shortenings formed by the initial syllables of the base expression (Potter, 1950: 163). The *alphabetism* refers the reader towards the alphabetical pronunciation of the constituent initial letters. Considering all the above, it is the term *initialism* that will be employed throughout the present paper to denote shortenings produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to its initial letters.

In spite of the vast body of academic literature dedicated to diverse terminological and typological aspects of initialisms, as indicated above, initialisms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century English slang are yet to be addressed as a specific research issue.

**The purpose of the present article** is threefold. Firstly, my aim is to identify all the structural types of the initialisms which have replenished the 21<sup>st</sup> century English slang word-stock. Secondly, the slang items belonging to each of the structural types established are to be systemized in order to determine which derivational patterns prove to be most productive in contemporary English slang. Thirdly, it is essential to establish the trends, if any, involved in the formation of the initialisms under study.

**The database of the research** is 181 novel initialisms. The slang items under study have been selected from three explanatory dictionaries: “The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English” (2008), “Vice slang” (2008), and “The Routledge dictionary of modern American slang and unconventional English” (2009).

#### **Presentation of the main material.**

Depending on the linguistic status of the derivational base involved in the formation of the initialism, all the slang neologisms collected in this study are divided into three groups: deproposemic, dephrasal, and delexical. The number of the dephrasal items significantly prevails over that of the

deproposemic and delexical ones (72.9% vs 17.7% vs 9.4% respectively).

### Dephrasal slang initialisms

The *dephrasal slang initialisms* (132 items, or 72.9% of the items under analysis) derive from word groups whose lexical components are reduced to their initials.

Morphologically, the dephrasal shortenings collected in this study are divided into five types: **substantival, adverbial, adjectival, verbal, and pronominal.**

The **substantival dephrasal slang initialisms** (120 items) derive from those word groups whose head is represented by a noun. For instance, the derivational base of the neologism *larp* 'the adult activity of recreating fantasy, generally quasi-mediaeval, adventures, usually performed with more enthusiasm than skill or accuracy' (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 393) is the subordinate substantive word group *live-action role-play*, its core being the compound noun *role-play*.

About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the substantival dephrasal slang initialisms (81 items) represent **general slang**, e.g. *BMT* 'habitual lateness' (derivational base *black man's time*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 72); *CHV* 'people who can only afford to live in council houses' (derivational base *council house vermin*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 143); *Sarah* 'a single, rich and happy woman' (derivational base *single, rich and happy*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 557); *SOS* 'a somewhat older student' (derivational base *somewhat older student*) (Dalzell, 2009: 918).

**Special slang** initialisms constitute approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  (39 items) of the shortenings attributed to this group. Of the different special sociolects enriching the 21<sup>st</sup> century English slang word-stock, it is **medical slang** that covers almost one half (16 items) of the coinages in question, e.g. *LOL* '(in doctors' shorthand) a little old lady' (derivational base *little old lady*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 406); *OAP* '(in doctors' shorthand) an over-anxious patient' (derivational base *over-anxious patient*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 467); *SIG* '(in doctors' shorthand) a bad-tempered, thoroughly objectionable individual' (derivational base *stroppy ignorant git*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 582); *TATT* '(in doctors' shorthand) tired all the time' (derivational base *tired all the time*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 641); *UBI* '(in doctors' shorthand) the facetious diagnosis applied to a casualty patient' (derivational base *unexplained beer injury*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 675) and others. The preponderance of medical slang neologisms is due to the fact that medical language per se abounds in initialisms compressing multiword terms into more operable smaller items.

The remaining 23 special slang initialisms represent five sociolects:

1) **business slang**, e.g. *MBNWA* 'the extensive use of e-mail to keep in touch with subordinates in business' (derivational base *management by not walking around*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 424);

2) **drug addicts' slang**, e.g. *KJ* 'a marijuana cigarette enhanced by phencyclidine' (derivational base *krystal joint*) (Dalzell, 2009: 597);

3) **military slang**, e.g. *PONTI/ponti* 'in military terms, a person of no tactical importance' (derivational base *person of no tactical importance*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 507);

4) **prison slang**, e.g. *NF* 'the Nuestra Familia prison gang' (derivational base *Nuestra Familia*) (Dalzell, 2009: 691);

5) **sports slang**, e.g. *WAG* 'the female partner of a footballer, especially an England team player' (derivational base *wives and girlfriends*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 684).

The **adverbial dephrasal slang initialisms** (5 items) derive from those word groups whose head is represented by an adverb or an adverbial phrase. The group features three slang neologisms used in computer communication and texting, namely *AFK* 'away from keyboard' (derivational base *away from keyboard*) (Dalzell, 2009: 7), *asap/ASAP* 'as slowly as possible' (derivational base *as slowly as possible*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 18), and *ICL* 'in Christian love' (derivational base *in Christian love*) (Dalzell, 2009: 543), as well as one example of journalistic slang, *yoy* 'why oh why' (derivational base *why oh why*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 716), and one medical slang coinage, *JLD* '(in doctors' shorthand) just like dad' (derivational base *just like dad*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 369).

The **adjectival dephrasal slang initialisms** (3 items) derive from those word groups whose head is represented by an adjective. The coinages within this group belong to special sociolects, namely medical slang, as in *GPO* '(in doctors' shorthand) good for parts only' (derivational base *good for parts only*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 302) and *NFN* '(in doctors' shorthand) the facetious diagnosis applied to a casualty patient' (derivational base *normal for Norfolk*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 456), as well as sports (golf) slang, as in *DAP* 'dead-ass perfect' (derivational base *dead-ass perfect*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 186).

The **verbal dephrasal slang initialisms** (3 items) derive from those word groups whose head is represented by a verb. The verb head is either a present participle, as in *CTD* '(in doctors' shorthand) expected to die soon' (derivational base *circling*

*the drain*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 177), or a past participle, as in *ABC* 'a piece of chewing gum that has already been chewed' (derivational base *already been chewed*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 1).

The **pronominal dephrasal slang initialism** (1 item) derives from the word group whose head is represented by a pronominal phrase, as in *YT* 'I/me/myself' (derivational base *yours truly*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 716).

Thus, of the five groups of dephrasal slang initialisms, the substantive ones prove to considerably outnumber the adverbial, adjectival, verbal, and pronominal ones. The motivation behind this trend consists in the fact that a noun, which forms the head of a substantive phrase, conveys the prototypical meaning of thingness, which plays a crucial role in the process of conceptualization as formation of mental representations of external reality.

#### Deproposemic slang initialisms

The **deproposemic slang initialisms** (32 items, or 17.7% of the items under analysis) derive from sentences whose lexical components are reduced to their initials.

19 neologisms are based on elliptical sentences, the omitted component constituting most frequently **a subject**; also **a predicate**; **a part of a predicate**; **a subject and a predicate**; **a subject and a part of a predicate**.

As many as 10 initialisms, or more than a half of the examples, feature **an omitted subject**, e.g. *CTN* 'used as shorthand in Internet discussion groups and text messaging) can't talk now' (derivational base *I can't talk now*) (Dalzell, 2009: 257); *DFA* 'describes an imaginary effect employed in the recording industry' (derivational base *it does fuck all*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 196); *PGT* '(in doctors' shorthand) the facetious diagnosis applied to a casualty patient' (derivational base *pissed, he/she got thumped*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 491); *TEETH* '(in doctors' shorthand) tried everything else, try homeopathy' (derivational base *if you tried everything else, try homeopathy*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 643). In all the items belonging to this group, the missing component is a personal pronoun employed in the nominative singular form: *I, you, he/she, or it*.

Conversely, only one initialism is found to be formed through **elimination of a predicate** – *BBH* 'used as a rallying cry for the precedence of male friendship over relationships with females' (derivational base *bros come before hoes*) (Dalzell, 2009: 129). The missing component is a simple verbal predicate, expressed by a verb in the third person plural of the Present Simple Tense of the Indicative Mood.

The **omission of a part of a predicate** accounts for the formation of three initialisms, namely *bobfoc* 'a girl with a beautiful body but an ugly face' (derivational base *body is off "Baywatch", face is off "Crimewatch"*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 74), *CNS-QNS* '(in doctors' shorthand) unintelligent' (derivational base *central nervous system – quantity is not sufficient*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 150), and *LOBNH* '(in doctors' shorthand) unintelligent' (derivational base *lights are on but nobody is home*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 405). In each of the slang neologisms, the deleted component is the copular verb *be* in the third person singular and plural of the Present Simple Tense of the Indicative Mood.

The **elimination of both a subject and a predicate** has contributed to the formation of only one initialism – *TMB* '(in doctors' shorthand) an elderly patient' (derivational base *he/she has had too many birthdays*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 655). The missing subject is the personal pronoun *he/she* in the nominative singular form, whereas the deleted predicate is the verb *have* in the third person singular of the Present Perfect Tense of the Indicative Mood.

Finally, the **deletion of a subject and a part of a verbal predicate** is attested in four slang neologisms. In the meantime, the missing **part** is either that of **a simple verbal predicate**, as in *CFA* '(used in Canada) someone not originating from a particular place in the Maritime Provinces' (derivational base *he/she has come from away*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 125) and *JK!* 'used after saying something that sounds improbable' (derivational base *I am just kidding!*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 369), or of **a compound verbal predicate**, as in *GTG* '(used as shorthand in Internet discussion groups and text messaging) got to go' (derivational base *Have got to go*) (Dalzell, 2009: 467) and *NTBH* 'ugly' (derivational base *he/she is not to be had*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 464). The eliminated subject in all the items belonging to this group is the personal pronouns *I* or *he/she* in the nominative singular form. The omitted part of the predicate is expressed either by auxiliary verbs, as in *CFA*, *GTG*, and *JK!*, or by a modal verb, as in *NTBH*.

Apart from the 19 slang neologisms discussed that result from the acronymization of elliptical sentences, the remaining 13 items are based on complete sentences. These, in turn, are represented by:

1) communicative sentences expressing imperativeness, as in *bogof* 'a retail special offer' (derivational base *buy one, get one free*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 75); *HAND* '(in text messaging) have a nice day' (derivational base *have a nice day*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 318); *MYOB* '(used as shorthand in Internet discussion groups and text messaging) mind

your own business' (derivational base *mind your own business*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 448); *SUMO* 'shut up and move on' (derivational base *shut up and move on*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 630);

2) informative sentences expressing declarativeness, as in *AOS* 'used for suggesting that there are no good options in a particular situation' (derivational base *all options suck/stink*) (Dalzell, 2009: 19); *GOK* 'God only knows' (derivational base *God only knows*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 295); *twat* 'used to reluctantly acknowledge an occurrence' (derivational base *there we are then*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 671); *WUCIWUG* '(in text messaging) what you see is what you get' (derivational base *what you see is what you get*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 709).

Thus, the deproposemic slang initialisms are based on both complete and elliptical sentences. Yet, the latter outnumber the former by approximately one third as the derivational bases of the slang neologisms. The motivation behind this trend might be that English speakers tend to acronymize already shortened sentences that they used previously in their communication for reasons of economy. Another intermediate conclusion is that the complete sentences involved in the formation of the initialisms are either imperative or declarative. The unattestedness of exclamatory sentences as derivational bases may be related to the intrinsic linear brevity (and, therefore, limited potential for acronymization) of exclamations which stems from their emotive nature. The derivational bases for the initialisms under study do not contain any interrogative sentences either, which may be caused by the function of the latter to gather information which may be remarkably diverse and thus utterly unpredictable, and this, in turn, will likely hinder the deciphering of the initialism.

#### **Delexical slang initialisms and pseudo-initialisms**

The *delexical slang initialisms* (17 items, or 9.4% of the items under analysis) derive from compounds whose lexical components are reduced to their initials. It is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority (16) of the neologisms belonging to this group are based on the initials of their formally and semantically autonomous components capable of functioning as independent lexemes, e.g. *ATC* '(in gambling) a type of conditional bet in which all or part of a winning is returned on another bet' (derivational base *any-to-come*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 14); *HP* 'a man' (derivational base *homee-palone*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 347); *KO* 'exhausted' (derivational base *knocked-out*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 388); *MG* 'a machine gunner' (derivational base *machine gunner*) (Dalzell, 2009: 658).

However, if an initialism derives from a classical compound, that is, a compound consisting of roots or affixes of ancient Greek or classical Latin origin, the capital letters retained will be the initials of these classical morphemes. The present study features one such example only: *OC* 'the synthetic opiate oxycodone used recreationally' (derivational base *oxycodone*) (Dalzell, Victor (a), 2008: 132), in which the capital *O* stands for the Greek prefixoid *oxy-* designating oxygen and the capital *C* stands for the asemanic morphoid *-codone*.

The *delexical slang pseudo-initialisms* (8 items, not included in the general count) derive from simplices or derivatives shortened at random, the letters retained being further capitalized regardless of their position (initial, medial, or final) in the derivational base.

The pseudo-initialisms collected represent **three possible letter combinations**:

**1) letter 1 + letter 2**, as in *EQ* 'an equalizer' (derivational base *equalizer*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 236); *JA* 'a Jamaican' (derivational base *Jamaican*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 359);

**2) letter 1 of the first syllable + letter 1 of the second syllable**, as in *CD* 'a condom' (derivational base *condom*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 124); *DG* 'a degenerate' (derivational base *degenerate*) (Dalzell, 2009: 283); *TV* 'a transvestite' (derivational base *transvestite*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 671);

**3) initial letter + final letter**, as in *TG* 'a young member of a youth gang' (derivational base *thug*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 645); *TX* '(in on-line poker playing) thanks' (derivational base *thanks*) (Dalzell, Victor, 2008: 674).

The structurally miscellaneous nature of the delexical initialisms and pseudo-initialisms collected within this research allows for drawing two significant conclusions. Firstly, the items identifiable graphically as initialisms due to consisting of capitals only do not necessarily follow the derivational pattern intrinsic to initialisms proper. Therefore, a clear need arises to introduce the notion of a *graphic initialism* (a lexical item consisting of prototypically uppercase letters which may (not) represent the initial letters of its semantic or asemanic components) embracing both *initialisms proper* and *pseudo-initialisms*. Secondly, the definition of the term *initialism proper* may have to be complemented as a shortening produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to the initial letters of its sublexical (morphemic or morphoid), lexical, or superlexical (with one or more functional words missing) components.

**Conclusions.** In the light of the miscellany of diverse modifications of capitalized shortenings,

the modern approach to understanding initialisms as shortenings produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to its initial letters proves to be somewhat faulty. Therefore, the notion of a graphic initialism is introduced to serve as an umbrella term embracing both initialisms proper and pseudo-initialisms. Of the 181 slang neologisms analyzed, the dephrasal initialisms numerically prevail over the deproposemic and delexical ones, the ratio being 72.9% to 17.7% to 9.4% respectively. The overwhelming majority of the dephrasal initialisms are based on substantival phrases (66.3%), whereas the coinages based on adverbial (2.8%), adjectival (1.6%), verbal (1.6%), and pronominal (0.6%) phrases prove to be fairly sparse. Approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the deproposemic items under study tend to derive from elliptical sentences (10.5%), whereas nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  derive from complete imperative and declarative sentences (7.2%). The delexical initialisms derive from compounds, including classical ones. In view

of the fact that, on the one hand, even morphemes within compounds can be reduced to their initials, whereas, on the other, certain functional words may be omitted in dephrasal or deproposemic items, an initialism proper may be redefined as a shortening produced by reducing a compound, word group, or sentence to the initial letters of its sublexical (morphemic or morphoid), lexical, or superlexical (with one or more functional words missing) components. Furthermore, initialisms proper are to be distinguished from pseudo-initialisms formed from simplices or derivatives and shortened at random, the letters retained being further capitalized regardless of their position (initial, medial, or final) in the derivational base.

Further synchronic studies focusing on initialism samples from other periods in English as well as on pseudo-initialisms will need to be undertaken to enhance our understanding of the nature, formation, diversity, and function of various shortenings.

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