

Errors in English and Arabic Acronyms Made by Iraqi University Students of Translation

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Abstract

Actually, acronyms are not studied or written about thoroughly in Arabic and there is no enough elaboration on it in the students' English textbooks. This study aims at investigating acronyms in English and Arabic, identifying, analyzing the errors that the university students are liable to make, and discovering the reasons beyond their errors. A diagnostic test applied to Translation students at the University of Mustansiriya. It is concluded that: (1) the achievement of the students in the English acronyms is better than their achievements in Arabic ones, (2) most of the university students can construct acronyms but they face more difficulties in discerning the words from which acronyms are constructed in English, (3) their performance is generally bad in both English and Arabic, and (4) some of the acronyms that are used in Arabic are borrowed from English without translation, while most others are translated into Arabic and written in their full forms without using acronyms.

Keywords: acronyms, Arabic, abbreviations, meaning, word formation, borrowed acronyms, university students

1. Introduction

Acronymy is one of the important processes of word formation. It has been used on a wide scale in English and Arabic now. The problem of the study is that the students at the Department of Translation cannot produce acronyms or know their origins in English and Arabic because they are not often governed by rules so it is difficult to predict them. On the other hand, acronyms in Arabic are not dealt with in the textbooks because Arab linguists deem this process to be borrowed from foreign languages and thus it must not be studied in spite of the fact that they are being used in daily life. This study aims at: (1) Investigating acronyms in English and Arabic to make a comparison between the two languages, (2) identifying and analyzing the errors in which the university students at the Department of Translation are liable to make in using acronyms, and (3) finding out the reasons behind their errors.

It is hypothesized that: (1) students at the Department of Translation are unable to identify the original words from which the acronyms are constructed in English and Arabic, (2) the achievement of the students in constructing English acronyms is much better than their achievement in the Arabic ones, (3) the students generally encounter real difficulties in using acronyms, and (4) the performance of the students in the English acronyms is better than that in the Arabic ones. The procedure adopted consists of the following steps: (1) Producing an explanation about acronyms in English and Arabic depending on the literature in this field in order to identify and clarify them, (2) Applying a test to a number of students at the fourth year so as to find out the difficulties they face in employing this process, and (3) analyzing and tabulating the data of the test on the basis of which conclusions are presented.

This study is limited to 100 Iraqi university students at the fourth year at the Department of Translation, College of Arts, the University of Mustansiriyah during the academic year 2010-2011. The reason behind choosing this sample of students is that they must have a good background about English and Arabic and they need some information about this subject to lessen the difficulties they face in translation. In addition, they are at an advanced stage.

2. Acronyms in English

2.1 Etymology and History

Abbreviations which are one of the most noticeable features of present-day English linguistic life would form a major part of any super dictionary.

In 1943, acronym is coined from Greek *akros* (which means ‘tip’) and *onyma* (which means ‘name’), by analogy with *homonym*. In fact, the British were the first to unearth the joys of creating acronyms even though the learnt word to designate what is essentially a letters game was born in America (Pyles, 1971: 300).

The fashion for abbreviations, which is often thought to be an exclusively modern habit, can be traced back to over 150 years and the fashionable use of acronyms comes and goes in waves. Nevertheless, in the present century, there has been a great increase in the use of acronyms (Crystal, 2004: 120).

2.2 Definitions

Most linguists define an acronym as a word formed from the initial letters of a group of words (Lester, 1991: 406; Crystal, 2003: 1 and Fromkin *et al.*, 2003: 95). Allan (1986: 241) and Kleinedler (1993:iii) state that acronyms are created from the initial letter(s) or two of the words in a multiword (compound) name. Bauer (1983: 237) substitutes the phrase “group of words” with “principal words in a title or phrase”, whereas Pyles (1971: 299) mentions that acronyms are sometimes made of syllables. A different opinion is given by Smith (2002: 154) who declares that an acronym might be formed from using one’s imagination.

2.3 Acronyms and Abbreviations

The term ‘abbreviation’ includes acronyms, blends, and clippings. A blend is, in its general sense, the combination of the beginning of one word and the end of another, such as *caplet* from *capsule* and *tablet*. The process of clipping is the shortening of a polysyllabic word by omitting part of the word’s ending, such as exams from *examinations* (Kleinedler, 1993: iv).

Actually, abbreviation refers to any shortened form of a word or a phrase; some have used initialism or alphabetism to refer to an abbreviation formed simply from a string of initials. Thus, acronyms and initialisms are deemed to be part of the process of abbreviation (Wikipedia, 2010 a: 2). On the one hand, Stageberg (1981: 123); Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1581-2); and Yule (2006:57) believe that acronyms can be divided into initialisms, such as *CIA* (Central Intelligence Agency) and those that are articulated as a word, such as *radar* (radio detecting and ranging). This is the way the researchers treated it in this paper.

On the other hand, Gramley and Pätzold (1992: 27) and Crystal (2004: 120) think that acronyms and abbreviations can be subsumed under initialisms. In a word, acronymy is a controversial concept because there is no universal agreement on the precise definition of the various terms (abbreviation, initialism, and acronym) used in word formation, nor on written usage.

2.4 Formation of Acronyms

Acronyms mostly consist of three letters (usually all capital), more intensively, acronyms may be built on acronyms. For instance, *PROM* (programmable read-only memory) is built on *ROM* (read-only memory) and *EPROM* (erasable programmable read-only memory) is created from *PROM* (Fromkin *et al.* 2003: 96). An acronym can also be formed from the first letters of the syllables in long polysyllabic words, (e.g. *PABA* (paraaminobenzoic acid) (Kleinedler, 1993: iv). There is no agreement on what to call acronyms whose enunciation involves the combination of letter names and words, such as *JPEG* [dʒeɪpəg] and *MS-DOS* [əməsdɔs]. In some cases, the name of a particular object is chosen to form the acronym and it spells something that sounds metaphorically right, for example, *BASIC* (beginner all-purpose symbolic instruction code); *WASP* (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant); and *FIST* (The Federation of Inter-State Truckers) (Bauer, 1983: 237).

Thus, the lack of predictability in acronyms is because of two reasons. Firstly, the original phrase is treated freely to form the acronym. Secondly, not every acronym is enunciated as one word (*ibid.*: 237-8). Sometimes, acronyms like *ATM* (*a*utomatic *t*eller *m*achine) and *PIN* (*p*ersonal *i*dentification *n*umber), are regularly written with one of their elements repeated, as in “*I sometimes forget my PIN number when I go to the ATM machine*” (Yule, 2006: 57).

Occasionally, unusual acronyms are written in a way that the letters are not the initial ones in the phrase, e.g. *KREEP* (a type of moon rock, where the *K* is the chemical symbol for potassium, and the acronym means *p*otassium, *r*are *e*arth *e*lements, *p*hosphate). In more common cases, more than one letter is taken from the beginning of one or more of the words in the original phrase, as in *Arvin* (*A*rmy of the *R*epublic of *V*ietnam) and *GHOST* (*G*lobal *H*orizontal *S*ounding *T*echnique) (Bauer, 1983: 238).

2.5 Uses of Acronyms

Acronyms belong to fields such as chemistry, health, transport, the military, computer, and education (Gramley and Pätzold, 1992: 27). Additionally, they tend to abound in large organizations in which they express long and cumbersome terms, as in *MADD* (*m*other *a*gainst *d*runk *d*riving) and *NATO* (*n*orth *A*tlantic *t*reaty *o*rganization) (Yule, 2006: 57). In addition, the various types of acronyms have been used most remarkably in the Internet, e.g. *BBC*, *FAQ*, *AOL*, *IMB*, and *IRC* (Crystal, 2004: 429). The use of acronyms for trade names has been established for a long time. Some cites are *Reo* (automobile, made by the *R. E. Olds Company*), *sebco* (extension drill, made by the *Star expansion and Bolt Company*) (Pyles, 1971: 301).

2.6 Reasons for Using Acronyms

Usually, the motive for creating acronyms is either brevity or catchiness in both speech and writing (Hartmann and Stork, 1976:1). Additionally, euphemism may be one of the reasons, for example, *BO* (*b*ranch *o*ffice), *TB* (*t*uberculosis), and *VD* (*v*enereal *d*isease) (Pyles, 1971: 299). Accordingly, succinctness and precision are highly valued and acronyms can contribute greatly to concise style. Furthermore, acronyms help to convey a sense of social identity, i.e., the group to which it belongs. So it wastes time and space if such acronym are stated fully and it would be strange indeed to hear someone routinely expanding *USA*, *AIDS*, *UNESCO*, *SARS*, *ROM*, *DOS*, *RAM* and all the other well-known acronyms of contemporary English (Crystal, 2004: 120).

Acronyms are being added to lexicon daily because of the wide-spread of the Internet and proliferation of computers. Examples of recent acronyms are *MORF* (*m*ale *o*r *f*emale), *FAQ* (*f*requently *a*sks *q*uestions), *WYSIWYG* (*w*hat *y*ou *s*ee *i*s *w*hat *y*ou *g*et), *FYI* (*f*or *y*our *i*nformation), and *BTW* (*b*y *t*he *w*ay) (Fromkin *et al.* 2003: 96-7). Actually, even if the acronyms are proper names, they have to be entered in the dictionary. They cannot be left to have their meanings decided from the original phrases (Allan, 1986: 241).

2.7 Punctuation

Usually, acronyms (especially of organizations) are written without full stops even though in American English they do (Swan, 2003: 2 and Lester, 1991: 358). Each letter is an abbreviation of a separate word and, in theory, should get its own termination mark. Yet such punctuation is diminishing with the belief that the presence of all-capital letters is sufficient to indicate that the word is an acronym.

An apostrophe is sometimes used before the *s* in plurals of acronyms (as in *MP's*, *CD's*, *IRA's*) (Watkins *et al.* 2001: 280). As mentioned earlier, most acronyms are written with capital letters, but some of them have become regular English words and thus are written with small ones, as in *radar* and *laser*. However, some rare cases are *e.g.* (for example, taken from the Latin *e*xempli gratia), *i.e.* (that is, from the Latin *i*d est), and *etc.* (and so on, from the Latin *e*t cetera) (Kleinedler, 1993: v-vi).

Articles are frequently dropped in acronyms, as in *UNESCO* (and not *the UNESCO*) (Alexander, 2002: 65). The new technique of using small caps is sometimes used in order to make the run of capital letters seem less jarring to the reader. For example, the style of some American publications, including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *USA Today*, is to use small caps for acronyms longer than three letters; thus *U.S.* and *FDR* are in normal caps, but *NATO* in small caps. The acronyms *AD* and *BC* are often written as small capped as well (Wikipedia, 2010 a: 10). As for numbers (both cardinal and ordinal) in names, they are often represented by digits rather than initial letters: as in *4GL* (fourth) or *G77* (*G*roup of *77*).

Usually the acronym is formed by picking up the first letter or two from the original complete Arabic word. In some cases, especially in scientific realms, markings and numbers are used in the acronyms as in the symbols and numbers used in mathematics e.g. نصف القطر from نق, and وهو المطلوب from ه.م.م, electricity system in geometry, chemical and physical equations e.g. القوة المركزية from قم, and كيلوغرام from كغم, botany and astronomy. Furthermore, they are used in modern linguistics and Morse code (Hijazi, 2000: 97).

Acronyms in Arabic are sometimes created from the first letters in the syllables of the original word(s), e.g. انتهى from ه.ا.ت. Unlike the English language, the acronym is written as separate letters when it is not pronounced as a full word in Arabic. In addition, some letters may be added to the acronym so as to make it metaphorically right, i.e. it resembles a word in Arabic; a clear example is منظم الشريعة المصرية from م.ش.م.ش. (Hijazi, 2000: 97).

3.4 Importance of Using Acronyms

Firstly, acronymy provides time owing to not writing full words. Secondly, it offers space in printing because full phrases and/or sentences are represented by individual letters. Thirdly, acronyms are used in order to have better comprehension of the original sentence or phrase. Fourthly, because some acronyms are used around the world, they become well-known in all of the global languages (Hijazi, 2000: 97).

As a matter of fact, acronymy has become a fundamental component in modern languages on science technology and media levels. Additionally, the increase in the industrial products requires the usage of short words and symbols that lead to the creation of specialized dictionary in some foreign languages (ibid.: 96).

Moreover, some of the names of famous authors, scientists, and linguists have been abbreviated into acronyms in Arabic, such as حج (ابن حجر الهيثمي), مر (محمد الرملي), and ع ش (علي الشبرامسلي) (Wright, 1971: 294). Acronyms are popular in the names of political parties and movements, for instance, أمل (حركة اليسار الديمقراطي), حيد (حركة المقاومة الإسلامية), and (اللبنانية) (Wikipedia, 2010 c: 2-3).

3.5 Borrowed Acronyms

Arabic has two types of borrowed acronyms:

3.5.1 Untranslated Borrowed Acronyms:

In English some acronyms have been formed and used in media world, as a consequence, have entered the Arabic language as they are in English, as in كوميسا (COMESA = Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), جات (GATT = General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), رادار (radar = radio detecting and ranging), بيسك (BASIC = Beginners' All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code), ليزر (Laser = Light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation), and كوبول (COBOL = Common Business Oriented Language) (Al-Jarf, 2009: 3). Some acronyms that refer to prominent news agency have been also borrowed as they are, for example, سي أن أن (CNN = Cable News Network) (ibid.).

3.5.2 Translated Borrowed Acronyms

In Arabic, the component of some borrowed acronyms, especially acronyms used for scientific degrees are translated and used in their full forms rather than using their acronyms, e.g. EMS (European Monetary System) which is translated into (نظام النقد الأوربي). IMF (International Monetary Fund), which is translated into (صندوق النقد الدولي) (Wikipedia, 2010 b:18).

Some exceptions are تدمك (ISBN = International Standard Bibliographic Number) that is translated into (الترقيم الدولي) (وكالة الأنباء الفلسطينية) وفا (MENA = Middle East News Agency), whereas (وكالة الأنباء الفلسطينية) وفا has no acronym in English (Hijazi, 2000: 102). News agencies have their names in Arabic in addition to their translated names in English with their acronyms. For instance, هيئة إذاعة الشرق الأوسط (MBC = Middle East Broadcasting Corporation), and وكالة الأنباء الكويتية (KUNA = Kuwait News Agency) (Wikipedia, 2010a: 2).

3.6 Punctuation

The letters that form the acronyms in the Arabic language are written separately with or without the use of dots, mostly so as to differentiate pronouncing them letter by letter from pronouncing them as full words. For instance, unlike (ص.ب.ب) (صندوق بريد) (وكالة الأنباء السعودية) (واس) is pronounced as a word (Mansur, 1996: 122). In order to discriminate between the plural and singular, male and female forms of acronyms in Arabic, the use of vowel points (الحركات) is done (Wikipedia, 2010 c: 1-2).

3.7 Meaning

Some instances of acronymy in the Arabic language are constructed conversely so that they give acceptable and preferable meaning in the society, e.g. حركة التحرير الفلسطينية (فتح) which is converted from حنف which means 'death' to فتح which means 'to set free'. Another important case is دعم (منظمة العمل الديمقراطي) which is written in a reversed way in an attempt to give an encouraging meaning that indicates the original one (Wikipedia, 2010 b: 3).

3.8 Attempt of Arabization

Many attempts of Arabization are being made by writers of books in various areas of life, more specifically on the internet because of the following reasons: (1) most of the acronyms are borrowed as they are from English as a consequence of considering English as the language of science, (2) there are few Arabic acronyms in comparison with English, and (3) the increase need for abbreviated forms in writing on the Net due to the huge development in all of the scientific fields (Al Najjar, 2009: 1).

4. Comparison between English and Arabic

1. The rapid advance of science and technology in recent centuries seems to be an underlying force driving the usage of acronyms, as new inventions and concepts with multiword names create a demand for shorter, more manageable names. Thus, what many Arab linguists believe that acronyms are not of that significance, they can be neglected, and as a consequence there is no need for using them in Arabic, is not true. As such, there are not many dictionaries of acronyms in Arabic like English.
2. In English, acronyms are not usually written with full stops (even though in American English they do), whilst in Arabic they usually put full stops.
3. In Arabic, some acronyms have been borrowed from more than one resource, mostly from English and French. This is why one may find two acronyms that mean the same thing as in اوتان and ناتو and سيدا and ايدز in Arabic.
4. The letters that shape the acronym in the Arabic language, especially initialisms, are taken from the base form of the original words.
5. Acronyms have not been studied or written about thoroughly in Arabic, where as they have attracted the attention of many linguists in English especially in the present time.
6. Some of the acronyms that are used in the Internet and the Arabic media are borrowed from English and other global languages without translation, while most others are translated into Arabic and written in their full form without using acronyms. In addition, many Arabic agencies use English and/or Arabic acronyms to refer to their agencies names like the case in the English language.

5. Data Collection

This section deals with collection of the data. A diagnostic test is constructed and applied to a number of students at the Department of Translation to unearth the difficulties they face in manipulating this process. The test is composed of four questions (see Appendix II). In the first question (Q.I), the students are asked to write the words from which acronyms are constructed in English. In the second question (Q.II), the participants are given Arabic acronyms and are asked to write the words from which acronyms are formed in Arabic. In the third question (Q.III), the students are required to jot down acronyms from the given set of English phrases. In the fourth question (Q.IV), the students are required to construct acronyms from the given set of Arabic phrases. Lastly, each question in the test consists of 15 items.

Some of the items of the test are taken from *The Origin and Development of the English Language* by Thomas Pyles (1971), *English Word-Formation* by Laurie Bauer (1983), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Randolph Quirk; Sidney Greenbaum; Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik (1985), *Linguistic Meaning* by Keith Allan (1986), *NTC's Dictionary of Acronyms and Abbreviations* by Steven Kleinedler (1993), *(Itjahaat al-luga al-fushaa wa elaaqatuha bilahjaat) Standard Language Trends and their Relationship with Dialects* by Jawdet Mansur (1996), *(Al-Ikhtisaraat al-hadethaa fi wassael al-ilam bein al-tarjama Al-Arabia wa Al-Iqtiradh Al-Majami) Modern Abbreviations in the Media between the Arabic Translation and Lexical Borrowing* by Mahmood Fehmi Hijazi (2000), *An Introduction to Language* by Victoria Fromkin; Robert Rodman and Nina Hyams (2003), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* by David Crystal (2004), *The Study of Language* by George Yule (2006), and *Acronyms in Arabic from Wikipedia* (2010 a) and *An Introductory English Grammar* by Stageberg (1981)

6. Data Analysis

This section is concerned with the analysis of errors committed by the students of translation. It also shows the reasons behind their errors. It is clear from table (1) (see Appendix I) that the subjects face real difficulties in identifying the origins of the given English acronyms. For this reason, the total number of their correct responses (125, 8.3%) is lower than that of the incorrect ones (1375, 91.7%).

It is obvious from table (2) (see Appendix I) that the total number of their incorrect responses (1286, 85.7%) is more than that of the correct ones (214, 14.3%). This is a clear indication that the students face real difficulties in producing Arabic acronyms.

Table (3) (see Appendix I) shows that the total number of the correct responses (339, 11.3%) is more than that of the incorrect responses (2661, 88.7%). This verifies the hypothesis that reads: *Students at the Department of Translation are unable to identify the original words from which the acronyms are constructed in English and Arabic.*

Table (4) (see Appendix I) indicates that students at the Department of Translation face little difficulties in constructing English acronyms. As such, the total number of the wrong responses (795, 53%) is slightly higher than that of the correct ones (705, 47%).

From table (5) (see Appendix I), the total number of their incorrect responses (1222, 81.5%) is more than that of the correct ones (278, 18.5%). This denotes that the students face real difficulties in constructing Arabic acronyms.

Table (6) (see Appendix I) exhibits that the total number of the correct responses (983, 32.8%) is more than that of the incorrect responses (2017, 67.2%). This confirms the hypothesis that reads: *The achievement of the students in constructing English acronyms is much better than their achievement in the Arabic ones.*

It is intelligible from table (7) (see Appendix I) that subjects' total number of correct responses (1322, 22%) is less than that of the incorrect ones (4678, 78%). This harmonizes with the hypothesis: *the students generally encounter real difficulties in using acronyms.*

Table (8) (see Appendix I) shows that the total number of the correct answers (830, 27.7%) is less than that of the incorrect ones (2170, 72.3%).

From table (9) (see Appendix I), it is apparent that the students encounter real difficulties in both Q.II and Q.IV as the total number of the incorrect responses (2508, 83.6%) is more than that of the correct ones (492, 16.4%).

From tables (8) and (9) (see Appendix I), it is clear that students face real difficulties in employing acronyms but their achievement in English acronyms is better than their performance in Arabic ones. This proves the hypothesis: *The performance of the students in the English acronyms is better than that of the Arabic ones.*

7. Sources of Errors

All students commit errors and errors are natural processes for language learning. This section deals with the reasons behind students' errors. In this study, most errors are attributed to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning and communication strategies.

7.1 Interlingual Transfer

This type of error happens owing to the effect of the learners' first language on the foreign one (Richards & Schmidt, 2002:267).

This sort of error can be seen in items (6),(8) and (13) of Q.I and items (2) and (15) of Q.I

Item (6): *FAQ* = *Formation Automobile Question

Item (8): *FYI* = *Foundation Year Institution

Item (13): *WAR* = *Wealth Automatic Revolution

Item (2): وكالة انباء الخير = واخ

Item (15) انتفاضة البلدان الاسلامية = اب ا

The reasons behind students' errors are that acronyms are not used on a massive scale in Arabic and the students at the Department of Translation are not acquainted with this process in Arabic.

7.2 Intralingual Transfer

This sort of errors occurs due to the influence of the target language on itself, (Penny, 2001: 8-9). Intralingual errors encompass the following:

7.2.1 *Overgeneralization error* is a form of negative transfer which involves the incorrect application of the previously learned second language material to a present second language context (Brown, 1987: 87).

7.2.2 *Ignorance of rule restriction*: the learners apply a rule on a category which is incorrect place that leads to error committing (Richards & Sampson, 1974:70).

7.2.3 *Incomplete application of the rules*: It involves the inability to learn more complex types of structures because the learner thinks that he can achieve effective communication by using relatively simple rules (Brown, 1987:8-3).

7.2.4 *False concepts hypothesized* that may derive from wrong comprehension of a distinction in the target language (Brown, 1987: 81-3 and Chanier *et al.* 1992: 134).

Overgeneralization and false concept hypothesized errors appear in items (4), (7) and (9) of Q.III and items (5) and (10) of Q.IV.

Item (4): *Male or Female* = *MF

Item (7): *Paraaminobenzoic acid* = *PA

Item (9): *Self-contained underwater breathing apparatus* = *Suba

Item (5): *موسى بن ميمون = ميم**

Item (10) *منظمة العمل الديمقراطي = معد**

From the items above, it is obvious that the students overgeneralize the rule thinking that they can construct acronyms only by taking the initial letters of the original principal words. They do not discern that some acronyms are constructed in a reversed way.

Incomplete application of the rules are emerged in items (2), (3) and (15) of Q.III and items (9) and (15) of Q.IV.

Item (2): *Army of the republic of Vietnam*. *ARV

Item (3): *Global horizontal sounding technique*: *GHST

Item (15): *potassium rare earth elements phosphate*: *PREEP

Item (9): *زيادة الزيادات = تز**

Item (15): *حركة تحرير فلسطين = حتف**

It is clear from the items above, that some symbols or letters may be added to acronyms, together with the initial letters that construct the acronyms for the easiness of enunciation. The students commit mistakes in punctuation too. For instance, some of the subjects write capital letters for the English acronyms in lieu of small ones and vice versa.

Some of the errors in items (4) and (12) of Q.III and items (11) and (12) of Q.IV may be attributed to ignorance of rules restrictions.

Item (4): *Male or female* = *MLFL

Item (12): *Old Kinderhook* = *Old hook

Item (11): *ذات مسؤولية محدودة = نمم**

Item (12): *سوق تجاري = ست**

7.3 Context of Learning:

This sort of errors arises from faulty methods of teaching or syllabus designers who concentrate on some aspects of the language and neglect others according to their belief or experiences (Brown, 1987: 179).

The instructors do not focus on this process and they do not give enough examples and exercises about acronyms as well as the books. In addition, the textbooks followed are old-fashioned and they cannot keep up with the recent tremendous amounts of acronyms especially those ones that are used nowadays.

On the other hand, Arab instructors and syllabus designers do not concentrate on this process of word formation because they envisage this concept does not exist in Arabic and it is not Arabic in origin, viz. it is borrowed from foreign languages like English and French.

This sort of errors can be seen in item (1) of Q.I and item (1) of Q.II.

Item (1): NATO = *National Organization State

Item (1): حماس = حركة حماس *

7.4 Communication Strategies:

In this section, we look at some of the communication strategies which the learners employ:

7.4.1 Avoidance: Learners sometimes shun the items which they perceive to be difficult for them (Lightbown & Spada, 2003: 75).

Avoidance errors can be found in item (7), (9), (13) and (14) of Q.I, and item (7) of Q.III.

Item (7): NASA

Item (9): BTW

Item (13): WAR

Item (14): MBC

Item (7): Paraaminobenzoic acid

In the same way, the same type of error can be found in item (6), (7), and (13) of Q.II and item (10) of Q.IV of the test.

Item (6): دالمو

Item (7): مشمش

Item (13): كوميسا

Item (10): منظمة العمل الديمقراطي

7.4.2 Creating New Words or Coinage: The learner may construct or invent new words or phrases so as to express the desired idea (Faucette, 2001: 15).

Coinage errors appear in item (5) of Q.III.

Item (5): What you see is what you get = * WSW

Coinage errors appear also in items (9) and (15) of Q.IV

Item (9): زال = زيادة الزيادات *

Item (15): ح ت فلس = حركة تحرير فلسطين *

The reason behind using coinage is that the students do not know acronyms very well. For this reason, they resort to creating new words.

8. Conclusions

It is clear from the total number of participants' correct responses (339, 11.3%) that is lower than that of the incorrect ones (2661, 88.7%) that Iraqi university students at the Department of Translation face real difficulties in identifying the words from which acronyms are constructed.

Most of them can construct acronyms, but they face more difficulties in constructing the Arabic acronyms because Arab linguists think that acronyms are not found in Standard Arabic as such they do not study them extensively unlike the case of acronyms in English. This outcome can be seen through the total number of their correct responses in constructing English acronyms (705, 47%) which is much higher than generating the Arabic ones (278, 18.5%). In general, they face real difficulties in using acronyms. Thus, the total number of the correct responses (1322, 22%) is lower than that of the incorrect ones (4678, 78%).

However, the total achievement of the students in using English acronyms is better than that of the Arabic ones as the total number of the correct responses in English acronyms (830, 27.7%) is greater than that of the Arabic ones (492, 16.4%).

Finally, it is found that some of the acronyms in Arabic are borrowed from English and other global languages and are either used as they are or they are translated into Arabic and then abbreviated.

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Appendix I

Table 1. Subjects' Achievement in the First Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	29	29%	71	71%
2	5	5%	95	95%
3	6	6%	94	94%
4	5	5%	95	95%
5	6	6%	94	94%
6	5	5%	95	95%
7	4	4%	96	96%
8	7	7%	93	93%
9	3	3%	97	97%
10	16	16%	84	84%
11	8	8%	92	92%
12	22	22%	78	78%
13	3	3%	97	97%
14	2	2%	98	98%
15	4	4%	96	96%
Total	125	8.3%	1375	91.7%

Table 2. Subjects' Achievement in the Second Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	16	16%	84	84%
2	4	4%	96	96%
3	88	88%	12	12%
4	3	3%	97	97%
5	74	74%	26	26%
6	2	2%	98	98%
7	1	1%	99	99%
8	2	2%	98	98%
9	6	6%	94	94%
10	5	5%	95	95%
11	3	3%	97	97%
12	4	4%	96	96%
13	3	3%	97	97%
14	2	2%	98	98%
15	1	1%	99	99%
Total	214	14.3%	1286	85.7%

Table 3. Subject Performance in the First and Second Questions

NO. of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Q.I	125	8.3%	1375	91.7%
Q.II	214	14.3%	1286	85.7%
Total	339	11.3%	2661	88.7%

Table 4. Subjects' Achievement in the Third Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	64	64%	36	36%
2	48	48%	52	52%
3	66	66%	34	34%
4	35	35%	65	65%
5	25	25%	75	75%
6	41	41%	59	59%
7	2	2%	98	98%
8	67	67%	33	33%
9	43	43%	57	57%
10	51	51%	49	49%
11	62	62%	38	38%
12	53	53%	47	47%
13	52	52%	48	48%
14	59	59%	41	41%
15	37	37%	63	63%
Total	705	47%	795	53%

Table 5. Subjects' Achievement in the Fourth Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	36	36%	64	64%
2	27	27%	73	73%
3	55	55%	45	45%
4	20	20%	80	80%
5	12	12%	88	88%
6	2	2%	98	98%
7	17	17%	83	83%
8	1	1%	99	99%
9	3	3%	97	97%
10	2	2%	98	98%
11	19	19%	81	81%
12	12	12%	88	88%
13	46	46%	54	54%
14	21	21%	79	79%
15	5	5%	95	95%
Total	278	18.5%	1222	81.5%

Table 6. Subject Performance in the Third and Fourth Questions

NO. of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Q.III	705	47%	795	53%
Q.IV	278	18.5%	1222	81.5%
Total	983	32.8%	2017	67.2%

Table 7. Subjects' Achievement in the Whole Test

No of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Q.I	125	8.3%	1375	91.7%
Q.II	214	14.3%	1286	85.7%
Q.III	705	47%	795	53%
Q.IV	278	18.5%	1222	81.5%
Total	1322	22%	4678	78%

Table 8. Subjects' Performance in the English Acronyms

No of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Q.I	125	8.3%	1375	91.7%
Q.III	705	47%	795	53%
Total	830	27.7%	2170	72.3%

Table 9. Subjects' Performance in the Arabic Acronyms

No of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Q.II	214	14.3%	1286	85.7%
Q.IV	278	18.5%	1222	81.5%
Total	492	16.4%	2508	83.6%

Appendix II

The Test

Q.I/ Write the origin of the following acronyms:

1) NATO 2) BASIC 3) WFP 4) PIN 5) CIA 6) FAQ 7) NASA 8) FYI 9) BTW 10) laser 11) radar 12) UNESCO 13) WAR 14) MBC 15) NEGRO.

Q.II/ Write the origin of the following acronyms in Arabic:

1) حماس 2) واخ 3) أ.م.د. 4) حدس 5) الخ 6) دالمو 7) مشمش 8) ق.ع 9) واع 10) وفا 11) أه 12) أش ا 13) كوميسا 14) جات 15) أب ا.

Q.III/ Make the acronym for each of the following points:

1. Erasable programmable read-only memory ()
2. Army of the republic of Vietnam ()
3. Global horizontal sounding technique ()
4. Male or female ()
5. What you see is what you get ()
6. Federation of inter-state truckers ()
7. Paraaminobenzoic acid ()
8. Military police ()
9. Self-contained underwater breathing apparatus ()
10. Intercontinental ballistic missile ()
11. General purpose ()
12. Old Kinderhook ()
13. Severe acute respiratory syndrome ()
14. Belgium Netherlands Luxembourg ()
15. Potassium rare earth elements phosphate ()

Q.IV/ Make the acronym for each of the following points in Arabic:

- 1- بدون تاريخ
- 2- حركة اليسار الديمقراطي

- 3- مقاومة طائرات
- 4- جمع جمع الجمع
- 5- موسى بن ميمون
- 6- وكالة الأنباء السودانية
- 7- الترقيم الدولي الموحد للكتب
- 8- قوة محمولة جوية
- 9- زيادة الزيادات
- 10- منظمة العمل الديمقراطي
- 11- ذات مسؤولية محدودة
- 12- أفواج المقاومة اللبنانية
- 13- وهو المطلوب
- 14- سوق تجاري
- 15- حركة تحرير فلسطين

Appendix III

The Answers of the Test

Answers of Q.I:

- 1- North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- 2- Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code.
- 3- World Food Programme.
- 4- Personal Identity Number.
- 5- Central Intelligence Agency.
- 6- Frequently Asked Question.
- 7- National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
- 8- For your information.
- 9- By the way.
- 10- Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.
- 11- Radio detecting and ranging.
- 12- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
- 13- Women Against Rape.
- 14- Middle East Broadcasting Corporation.
- 15- National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization.

Answers of Q.II:

- 1- حركة المقاومة الإسلامية
- 2- وكالة أنباء الخليج
- 3- أستاذ مساعد دكتور
- 4- الحركة الدستورية الإسلامية
- 5- إلى آخره
- 6- دار المؤمنين
- 7- المنظمة الشيوعية المصرية
- 8- قطاع عام
- 9- وكالة الأنباء العراقية
- 10- وكالة فلسطين الإنباء
- 11- انتهى
- 12- أنباء الشرق الأوسط
- 13- السوق المشترك لدول شرق و جنوب إفريقيا
- 14- الاتفاقية العامة عن التعريفات الجمركية والتجارة
- 15- وكالة الأنباء العالمية Associated Press International

Answers of Q.III:

- 1- EPROM 2- Arvin 3- GHOST 4- MORF 5- WYSIWYG 6- FIST 7- PABA 8- MP 9- Scuba 10- ICBM 11- jeep or GP 12- OK 13- SARS 14- BNL 15- KREEP.

Answers of Q.IV:

- 1- و.ه.م. 13- امل 12- ذ.م.م 11- دعم 10- تت 9- جولقة 8- تدمك 7- سونا 6- رمبم 5- ج ج ج 4- م.ط 3- حيد 2- ب.ت 1- فتح 15- س.ت