

## English Acronymic Loans in Bangla

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### Abstract

Acronyms, idiosyncratic part of natural languages, have become cross-lingually popular. The English language has experienced a resurgence of acronyms since the World Wars. This new wave of the non-morphematic words in English has left an indelible impression on Bangla. Like mainstream words, Bangla has also accepted many acronym loans from the English language. This is a small-scale research on the mechanisms and patterns of borrowing English acronyms and their functions in our language. In conducting this qualitative research, we have used diverse resources including dictionaries, lexicons, scholarly publications, newspapers and social media sites. Our data reveal that the English Acronymic loans in Bangla can be compartmentalized into two broad categories – direct and indirect loans. There are many direct loans from the English sources. We have named this type as ‘Global Acronyms’. The second broad category includes acronyms locally created using pure English materials (Local acronyms); acronyms created using pure Bangla materials (Indigenous acronyms); acronyms created with an admixture of bilingual elements (Hybrid acronyms) and acronyms formed from native materials but acronymized in the Roman script (Transliterated acronym). In our data, we see the presence of another type which we have called ‘Re-semanticized acronyms’. This refers to acronyms which are reinterpreted by Banglophones, for example, AIDS (Acute Ideological Deficiency Syndrome). Both direct and indirect loans in Bangla have shown considerable productivity. The loans can be prefixed and suffixed with Bangla affixes. They can be inflected for pluralization. They are also open to participate in non-concatenative processes like reduplication in Bangla.

### Introduction

Life in the modern times is inundated with ‘acronyms’ and yet the term ‘acronym’ is one of those words that has remained maddeningly ill-defined for its entire existence (Zimmer). Ben Zimmer, after surveying the history of the term, offers the simplest definition of acronyms as pronounceable words created out of the initials or major parts of compounds like ‘NATO’, ‘radar’ or ‘TriBeCa’.

Mainstream word formation processes utilize morphemes to create new words (Zapata 24). In this respect, ‘acronyms’ are somewhat idiosyncratic by nature as they are formed out of initial letters

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of a group of words. This means that acronyms are the products of a non-morphematic word formation process.

Etymologically speaking, the word 'Acronym' was coined in 1943 from Greek 'akrosynoma' meaning a name derived from the tips of some names. So, by origin, 'acronym' refers to a word formed by the juxtaposition of the initial letters of some other words. In other words, we can say that when the initial letters of a phrase form a new word, we call it 'Acronym'. For example, the initial letters of 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization' form the single word 'NATO'. When the initial letters of the phrase 'National Aeronautics and Space Administration' are put together to form a new word, we get the famed 'NASA'.

Acronym is one of the three frequently used word formation processes involving abbreviation of words. The remaining two of the word shortening processes are Clipping and Initialism (Quirk et al. 182).

The linguistic analysis of the acronymization process by researchers has proved that acronymization as a word-formation process is common cross-linguistically (Altakhaineh 7). This cross-linguistic popularity of acronyms is connected with the observation of Yamina Beanne. She argues that as word shortening mechanisms are globally present across language families, acronyms should be treated as parts of language universals (Beanne 29).

Acronyms, which are idiosyncratic part of our lexical repertoire, are almost omnipresent in modern times. They can be traced in scientific and non-scientific journals i.e. NATO, CD-ROM, VAT, etc. Their presence is also visible in the social media sites (e.g. ASAP, LOL, etc.). The presence of acronyms is also tangible in the domains of text messaging and email correspondences. Technologization of the world has tremendously necessitated precision and economy in communication. Albeit the use of acronyms dates far back to the Roman times (INRI is an acronym found in use in ancient Rome), the tempo of word shortening techniques got accelerated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Military personnel and statesmen had to use acronyms for faster communication. Besides lending rapidity to communication, acronyms also helped people involved in the war in safely encrypting their messages.

The first edition of the *Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations Dictionary* (AIAD) was published in 1960. The AIAD contained 12000 headwords. The 16<sup>th</sup> edition published in 1992 had an incredible number of entries –520000 (Izura and Playfoot 867)! This statistics speaks volumes in favour of the exponential growth and popularity of the word shortening techniques such as acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations.

### **Theoretical Background: Definition, Taxonomy, Orthography and Features of Acronyms**

#### **Definition**

According to Ben Zimmer, an acronym is “a pronounceable word created out of the initials or major parts of a compound term, like NATO, *radar* or *TriBeCa*”. When the abbreviation is pronounced by the names of initial letters, like *C.I.A.* (“see eye ay”), *U.C.L.A.* (“you see ell ay”) or the unwieldy *WWW* (“double-u double-u double-u”), then it’s best to call it an *initialism*. This is the nomenclature preferred by many abbreviation-watchers, including the creators of the *Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations Dictionary*.

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The formation of acronyms or acronymization is conventionally considered as a word formation process and hence it is discussed in Morphology. A simplified definition of acronymization has been offered in the preceding section. In addition to that, a couple of definitions are furnished below extracted from the works of authorities on the field –

1. Acronyms are shortenings built from the initial letters in a phrase or name. Acronyms are marked as single words, for example, NASA, AIDS. (Finegan 48)
2. Acronymization is the process whereby a new word is formed from initial letters of the constituent words of a phrase or sentence. (Zapata 7-8)

If we have a look at the orthography of acronyms, we see that some acronyms are written in upper case letters while others are written using the combination of upper case and lower case letters in the English language. For example, NATO belongs to the first category while ‘Radar’ belongs to the second. There is yet another orthographic form of acronyms where the shortened terms are written using all lower case letters, for example, scuba.

From the above discussion and examples provided, we may infer that

- Acronyms are generally formed out of the initial letters of some other words or a phrase
- Non-initial letters can also participate in the formation of acronyms
- When acronyms are pronounced as words, they may be composed of initial letter, non-initial letters, or mixture of initial letters and non-initial letters.

#### ***Taxonomy of Acronyms***

The following are the general types of acronyms –

**Alphabetic acronym:** Acronyms formed from the combination of initial letters of phrases or names are called Alphabetic acronyms. For example, NASA, WHO, etc.

**Syllabic acronym:** Acronyms formed by the syllables of the constituent words of a compound or phrase are called Syllabic acronyms. For example, SatNite (Saturday Night), BeNeLux (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg), Forex (Foreign Exchange), Interpol (International Police; the official name of this organization is ‘International Criminal Police Organization’).

**Mixed acronyms:** These acronyms are formed by the combination of first letter and first or last syllable of constituent components of a name or phrase. For example, IMAX (Image Maximum).

Apart from these common categories, there are some other types of acronyms as well. One of these types is the acronyms where we see the combinations of words and numbers. For example, Covid-19. There are also word and letter combination in some acronyms. For example, CD-ROM.

#### ***The Acronym-Initialism Distinction***

Though ‘initialism’ as a linguistic term is older and broader than ‘acronym’, and they have been in use interchangeably, some differences are there between the two. According to Paula Rua, initialisms have two forms – acronyms and alphabetisms. In the context of this article, we will consider strings of initial letters of names or phrases which are pronounceable as words as acronyms. Group of letters picked up from longer names or phrases which are not pronounceable as words can be called alphabetism.

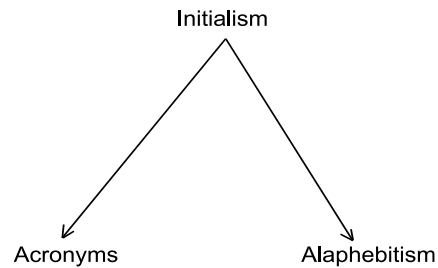


Figure1 Rua's Model of Initialism

So, from the above triangular model, we see that initialism is the broader term of which acronym is a mere part (Rua 33). In the remaining portion of this article we will consider letter words which are pronounced or read as words as acronyms.

#### ***Features of Acronyms***

As acronyms are letter words (McArthur 28), they are composed of the initial letters of longer words or phrases. However, not all the initial letters of the longer words or phrases are used in the construction of acronyms. Normally, the function words are omitted in the process of acronym building. This is aimed at keeping the acronyms manageable.

According to Ingrid Fandryaz, the most distinctive feature of acronyms is that they are formed in the graphic mode. This pen and paper origin of acronyms sets them apart from other word formation processes.

Garland Cannon in his scholarly discussion on acronyms points out that the source of an acronym must have, at least, three constituents. Generally, not more than two initial letters or sounds of a constituent can be retained in the resultant form. The researcher, however, has acknowledged the exceptions to this general rule.

Pronounceability is an important factor in the construction of acronyms. Sometimes, the sequencing of the letters may be changed to make sure that the acronym is pronounceable. Ingrid Fandryaz quotes an example of this type from *Time* –

MISHAP – Missile High Speed Assembly Program. Here, in the acronymized form the positions of 'H' and 'S' have been interchanged to ensure the pronounceability and homonymy (Fandryaz 71).

Creativity plays a major role in the formation process of acronyms. In this regard, the observation of Garland Cannon is that "acronyms are among the most creative, freewheeling creations in vocabulary today. They differ from most other items in that they are never lapses and are seldom formed by analogy, but are consciously made. Organizations sometimes choose a proper-sounding name by assembling a sequence of words to effect the desired collocation" (102).

Some acronyms can be re-interpreted albeit in a jocular fashion. In such cases, irony is the driving force. For example, Fiat (Fix It Again, Tony instead of Fabbricaitaliana di Automobili Torino).

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Acronyms behave like normal words. They can participate in the morphological processes like other lexemes. Steven Pinker's observation is noteworthy in this regard. He rightly points out "acronyms, like phrases, can turn into bona fide words, as a language evolves as in TV, VCR, UFO, SOB, and PC. Once an acronym has become a word there is no reason not to treat it as a word, including adding a plural suffix to it. Would anyone really talk about *three JP* (Justice of Peace) *five POW* (Prisoners of War) or *nine SOB* (Sons of bitches) (Pinker 72)?"

The following are the salient features of acronyms that we get from the above discussion –

- Acronyms are letter words formed from the initial letters of longer words or phrases.
- Initially they come into existence graphemically.
- Pronounceability is an important factor in the construction of acronyms.
- The creation of acronyms is a laboriously creative process and some acronyms are re-interpreted creatively.
- Acronyms are like normal lexemes. They are inflectable. Like other words, they can participate in morphological processes.

#### Acronyms: A Brief History

It is a widely known fact that abbreviations and acronyms go back several millennia (Cannon 120). The strong intention to economize is seen in Hebrew and Roman examples like MILH (MiLohLnvHshmilh – Who shall go up for us to heaven?) and INRI (Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeum – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews).

Though acronymy seems to be a linguistic phenomenon of the modern times, it has ancient roots in Greek too. The first recorded use of acronymy is seen in the Greek word 'ichthys' meaning 'fish'. The expansion of this ecclesiastical acronym is 'Iesous Christos, TheousHuios, Soter' (Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior).

In Great Britain, we see the popular presence of an acronym in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This political acronym, CABAL, was constructed from the names of five cabinet ministers. The 'penta' was comprised of Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale (Algeo 220).

In American English, the first known acronyms were recorded in 1879. Walter P. Phillips developed it for The United Press Association. The acronyms intended to be used as telegraphic codes were 'SCOTUS' (Supreme Court of the United States) and 'POT' (President of the ...). 'POT', in 1895, ended up in 'POTUS' (President of the United States). 'POTUS' was later joined by 'FLOTUS' (First Lady of the United States). The growth of this type of acronyms kept an upward curve because of their succinctness. These acronyms because of their shorthandedness received importance in the lingos of journalism, diplomacy and later on they sealed their place in the academic circle.

The German equivalent of acronyms is 'akronym' and it had been in use since the early 1920s. Though initialisms date back 1844, Ben Zimmer points out "It took another century for *acronym* to make the scene in English, taking off during World War II ... Stephen Goranson, a researcher at Duke University, recently discovered a use of *acronym* from 1940, ...". There is consensus among the linguistic historians that despite the presence of acronyms from antiquity, they started to get widespread acceptance since the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The wartime emergency situation warranted extreme precision in language use. Messages needed to be encoded succinctly and safely in the least

possible time. These parameters were aptly met by acronyms and hence they proliferated during the wartime. Now the internet revolution and the resultant unprecedented growth of electronic communication have caused the perennial bloom of this flower from the linguistic garden.

**Acronymization: Its uses and functions in Bangla**

Despite the presence of word shortening mechanisms in Bangla for a long period of time pre-dating the British colonization of the Indian sub-continent, the popularity of the twin processes of abbreviation and acronymization got momentum after the prolonged linguistic contact between Bangla and English got started. The processes have been vigorously incorporated into the fabric of Bangla with the IT revolution and increased global connectivity between the Banglophones and other communities through the internet. Increased national and international communication, exponential growth in the number of highly educated individuals, rapid industrialization and urbanization and above all, democratization of technology like availability of mobile phones with internet connections, wifi etc. have tremendously contributed to the popularity of word-shortening mechanisms like acronymization and abbreviations in Bangla. Higher educational and scientific institutions have also played a remarkable role in the dissemination of this process. Apart from the laudable role of academia in the dispersal of acronymization, the role of mobile phone operators also deserves mention in accelerating the popularity of word shortening techniques in Bangla. To say all in a few words, we can say that the Banglophones have adopted word shortening mechanisms to save time, space, and money. Economy of language here entails time, energy, space, and money.

Pragmatic factors apart, acronymization like the English language, serves the purpose of getting rid of repetitions in Bangla. Besides serving utilitarian purposes of saving time, space and energy, acronymization adds to the beauty of the language, both in its written and oral forms. No more is acronymization the territory solely to be visited by the writers of scientific papers - the land can these days be explored by anyone, Every Tom, Dick and Harry. The domain of acronymized forms are no more terra incognita for the common language users. Even the illiterate people these days have their fair share in this whom you will frequently hear using the shortened forms 'ILU' or 'OMG' over the phone!

**Materials and Method**

In conducting this qualitative study, the researcher has collected data chiefly from lexicographic sources. To diversify the data and to make them representative, other sources have also been used. Among these are government websites, social media sites and newspapers.

As there is a paucity of materials on acronyms in Bangla, the researcher has utilized his native-speaking status in collecting and generating required data. Researcher-observation as a reliable source of data was introduced by Uriel Weinreich. Authentic data, according to him, can be collected by a trained researcher (Weinreich 112).

**Data**

Data for this study have been collected from diverse sources including the following dictionaries. Government websites, newspapers and social media sites have also supplied us with data which have been recorded under 'Researcher's Collection'.

***Chalti Shobder Abhidhan***

The following data have been collected from Mamunur Rasheed's *Chalti Shobder Abhidhan*:

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Photo Credit = Fokrey (ফক্রে)  
Tax Identification Number = TIN (টিন)  
Laugh Out Loud = Lool/Lools (লুল/লুলজ)  
Personal Identification Number = PIN (পিন)  
Chattogram Biswabiddiyala (Chittagong University) = Chobi (চবি)  
Dhaka Biswabiddiyalaya (Dhaka University) = Dhabi (ঢাবি)  
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology = Shabiprobi (শাবিপ্রবি)  
Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation on Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders = BIRDEM (বারডেম)  
National Academy for Educational Management = NAEM (নায়েম)  
Haste Haste Morey Gelam = HaHaMoGe (হাহামগে)

#### ***Banglai Procholino Engreji Shobder Abhidhan***

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute = BARI (বারি)  
Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development = BARD (বার্ড)  
Dhaka University Central Students' Union = DUCSU (ডাকসু)  
Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation = BSIC (বিসিক)  
Water Supply and Sewage Authorities = WASA (ওয়াসা)  
International Rice Research Institute = IRRI (ইরি)  
Water and Power Development Authority = WAPDA (ওয়াপদা)

#### ***Bangla Slang Abhidhan***

Avra Basu has recorded, among others, the following examples of acronyms in Bangla:  
Acute Ideological Deficiency Syndrome = AIDS (এইডস)  
I Love You = ILU (ইলু)

#### ***Researcher's collection***

The following examples have been collected by the researcher from different sources:  
Bangladesh Institute of Academic Management = BIAM (বিয়াম)  
Durniti Daman Commission = Dudak (দুদক)  
Chattogram City Corporation = Chosik (চসিক)  
Chattogram Unnoyan Kartripakkha = Chouk (চউক)  
Rajdhani Unnoyan Kartripakkha = Rajuk (রাজউক)  
JaS = Jati Songo (UN) (জাতিসংঘ)  
SaS = Sahajjo Songstha (সাহায্য সংস্থা)  
VAT = Value Added Tax (ভ্যাট)  
Muillo Songjojon Kar = Musak (মুসক)  
Self-Contained Under Water Breathing Apparatus = SCUBA (Scuba) (স্কুবা)  
RAT = Rapid Action Team (র্যাট)

**Official Acronyms used in Bangladesh**

The following are examples of some acronyms officially coined and used in Bangladesh.

Acronyms enjoying high-frequency use have been transliterated into Bangla –

- Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh = ADAB
- Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies = BAIRA (বায়রা)
- Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company = BAPLEX (বাপেক্স)
- Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development = BARD (বার্ড)
- Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute = BARI (বারি)
- Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council = BARC
- Bangladesh Textile Exposition = BATEXPO (ব্যাটেক্সপো)
- Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority = BEPZA (বেপজা)
- Bangladesh Institute of Research on Diabetes and Endocrine Metabolism = BIRDEM (বারডেম)
- Bangladesh Oxygen Company = BOC
- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee = BRAC (ব্র্যাক)
- Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology = BUET (বুয়েট)
- Dhaka Electric Supply Company = DESCO (ডেস্কো)
- Eastern News Agency = ENA
- Fair Election Monitoring Alliance = FEMA (ফেমা)
- International NGO = INGO
- Memorandum of Understanding = MoU
- National Institute of Public Administration = NIPA
- National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine = NIPSOM
- Overseas Correspondents' Association of Bangladesh = OCAB (ওকাব)
- Rapid Action Battalion = RAB (র্যাব)
- Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad = SKOP (স্কপ)

**Acronyms in sentences**

- Afghanistaney a-NATO (অ-ন্যাটো) deshgulir Bhumika Kemon chhilo?
- Dudaker obhijan choloman thakuk.
- Jolaboddota niroshoney Chosiker ghum kokhon bhanbey?
- NATOheer Afghanistan Kemon hobey?
- AIDSakranto lokjoner upojukto chikithsar bebostha kora houk.
- Tar MUNpriti dekhar moto. Kintu eto MUNtun diye ki hobey?
- Amader Radargulo thik moto kaj korey ki?
- Al-Nassr-e swagatam, Priyo GOAT CR7.
- Covidakranta lokjonke sahajjo koro.
- Tar BUETioohonkar BCS porikkhai bhupatito holo.
- WASA-twasa lagbena, ekta deep tubewell bosiey nao.
- Hall-e keno, faokhete holey FAO-e jao.



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Shilpomontrir SKOPpriti dekhar motho.  
IRRItey sonali diner sonali swapno krishoker.  
Nijer ghorer chaley tin nai, amar abar TIN!  
EsobPINTin baad den, ami analogue manush.  
Lukieyelukieye koi jao sobi jani, amar radar fanki deya eto sohojna!  
Etoeto phonalap fansh hochchhey, konta asol konta nokol buja dai.  
Kothata bolatey tar BUETio abhijathey gha legechhey.  
(Researcher generated sample sentences)

#### Discussion

The collected data reveal the patterns, morphological behavior, status and productivity of English acronyms in Bangla.

Let us begin our discussion with the types of English or English-induced acronyms in Bangla. Like lexical items, acronym-borrowing in Bangla has two broad patterns – Direct and Indirect borrowings. The members of the first category are those borrowed directly from English. Some examples of these unaltered acronyms from our data are – NATO, NASA, AIDS etc. Here we would like to dub these direct acronym loans as ‘Global Acronyms’.

The other class the members of which have been indirectly borrowed can be called ‘Local Acronyms’. Local acronyms are constructed in a number of ways. They can be formed using materials from the English language but these are ‘home made’ products. Some examples of this class are – NAEM, BIAM, WAPDA etc. Some acronyms of this class are also constructed using Bangla materials. For example, MuSaK (Muillo Songjojan Kar) etc. There are some acronyms in Bangla formed using Bangla materials but they are transliterated in the Roman script. For example, SKOP (Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad). There is yet the presence of another acronym which is composed of both Bangla and English elements. For example, DuDaC (Durniti Daman Commission).

We have seen the presence of acronyms like ‘MuSaK’, ‘ChaUK’, ‘RajUK’ etc. The raw materials used in the molding of these acronyms are purely indigenous. They are pure Bangla acronyms processed by the utilization of Bangla words. These acronyms can be labelled as ‘Indigenous Acronyms’.

The acronym ‘SKOP’ is built from Bangla lexical materials but is written and pronounced in the Romanized form and hence it can be christened as ‘Transliterated acronym’.

The acronym ‘DuDaC’ (Durniti Daman Commission) is composed of bilingual elements. We can dub it as ‘Hybrid acronym’.

Another interesting type of acronym is also in use in Bangla. Let us have a look at ‘AIDS’ from *Bangla Slang Abhidhan*. The global acronym has been purged of 25% of its old carnal elements and re-fleshed by the speakers of Bangla maintaining the original skeleton. In its ‘old bones and some new flesh’ form, AIDS stands for ‘Acute Ideological Deficiency Syndrome’. Here all the materials are of English stock but the acronym has been recharged with new semantic significance. This acronymic ‘old wine in new bottle’ may be called as ‘Re-semanticized Acronyms’ or ‘Reinterpreted Acronyms’. Twists of this type are generally added to the acronyms by young users of the social media.

### **Morphological Processing of Acronymic Loans in Bangla**

The English loan acronyms in Bangla show remarkable performance in getting combined with other morphological processes. For example, some of them can be inflected to form plurals. The acronym 'Radar' can be pluralized by adding the Bangla plural marker suffix 'gulo' to it which results in the hybrid form 'Radargulo (রাদারগুলো)'. Some of the acronyms are open to affixation – 'A-NATO (অ-ন্যাটো)' (Non-NATO), NATOheen (ন্যাটোহীন) (Without the presence of NATO). The acronyms can form Euphonic combination with Bangla words, i.e. AIDSakranto (এইডসাক্রান্ত). The acronyms can also take different case endings in Bangla. For instance, 'Sey Bracey (ব্র্যাক-এ) kormoroto'. Here we see the acronym taking the locative case ending. Some of the acronyms can also take genitive case ending in Bangla. For example, 'UNICEF programgulo onek doridro deshey bhalo fol diechhey'. In this sentence, 'UNICEF' has taken the genitive case-ending in Bangla. Some of the acronyms can also be reduplicated in Bangla. For example, 'Esob MUNTun nakorey poralekha koro'.

### **Phonological and Semantic Shifts**

A few of the borrowed acronyms in Bangla can also undergo some changes in form and meaning. One such example attested by our data (*Chalti Shobder Abhidhan*) is 'Lool' or 'Lools'. It is based on LOL (Laughing Out Loud). But it has undergone phonological change in Bangla by the insertion of an extra vowel sound /o/ between the two consonants. Both the two variants of the acronym are in use in Bangla. With the insertion of the extra vowel sound, it has undergone semantic change in Bangla. By Lool or Lools, the younger speakers of Bangla refer to someone with philandering mentality who is senior to them in term of age. Here we see that through the twin processes of phonological and semantic changes, the acronym in the Bangla language has adopted a new and curious look, in terms of both form and meaning.

### **'YABA-compatibility' in Nomenclature**

Garland Cannon suggests that in choosing acronyms, we should remember that the letter word should be 'YABA-compatible' (103). The acronym 'YABA' here stands for 'Yet Another Bloody Acronym'. By 'YABA-compatible', the scholar means that in the construction process of acronyms, pronounceability and inoffensiveness of the chosen form should be ensured (103). In conformity with the basic principles at work in the construction process of acronyms, meticulous care is taken in Bangladesh. For example, the name of the elite force 'RAB' (Rapid Action Battalion) was 'RAT' (Rapid Action Troops) at the inception. But as 'RAT' is not a bravery-emitting name, it was changed to a more appealing form, 'RAB'. This reminds us of an American acronym 'BOMB' which was discarded by the Nixon administration for its negative semantic connotation.

### **Lexicalization of acronyms**

Some acronyms in Bangladesh have become household words. They are so frequently used that people are oblivious of their status. This widespread dispersal and the subsequent promotion of acronyms to words is called lexicalization. In other words, the process through which an acronym passes from being a sequence of letters into a word is called lexicalization (Beanne

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27). ‘IRRI’ and ‘BIRDEM’ are two examples of this class in Bangladesh. Leonhard Lipka in his discussion points to the temporal factor behind the lexicalization of acronyms (5). He thinks that lexicalization is a process of diachronic change through which a string of initial letters formed out of an expression is reduced to a single word. How time contributes to the lexicalization of acronyms has also been commented upon by Brinton and Traugott – “the change whereby in certain linguistic contexts speakers use a syntactic construction or word formation as a new contentful form with formal and semantic properties that are not completely derivable or predictable from the constituents of the constructions or the word formation pattern. Over time, there may be further loss of internal constituency and the item may become more lexical” (144).

Yamina Bianne has indicated another operational factor that leads an acronym to being treated as a word. According to her, “lexicalization is achieved when the relation between the word’s meaning and the acronym becomes stronger than the relation between the acronym and its expanded form (Bianne 27).” From the English language ‘radar’, and ‘scuba’ are good examples that prove the point of Bianne.

In the light of the discussion on lexicalization of acronyms by Yamina Bianne, Leonhard Lipka, Laurel J. Brinton and Elizabeth C. Traugott, we see that two factors are at work behind the lexicalization of acronyms. Bianne (32) terms these factors as ‘frequency’ and ‘constancy’. When acronyms are bestowed with these factors, they got stabilized in a language. Stabilization leads to the lexicalization of acronyms.

Now let us evaluate some English acronymic loans in Bangla in the light of the preceding theoretical discussion. Some acronyms in Bangla because of their high-frequency use have gained pan-Bangladesh dispersal. They have also been being used for decades. For example, ‘IRRI’, ‘BUET’ and ‘BIRDEM’. These acronyms are often treated as independent, one-word unit. People from all walks of life come across these acronyms both in the print and electronic media. This repeated exposure to the acronyms has made them conversant with the letter words. Many of them use these acronyms like native Bangla words. For example, let us think of the sentence ‘BCS porikkhai fail Korey tar BUETio ohonkar bhupatito holo’. Here the local English acronym ‘BUET’ has been affixed with Bangla suffix ‘-io’. ‘BUETio’ in this context means ‘connected with BUET’. Let us have a look at another sentence ‘BIRDEM, BIRDEM Korey sey local haspataley chikithsha nanie bipodey porlo.’ BIRDEM, the famous specialized hospital situated in Dhaka, is a household name in Bangladesh. Even semi-literate people in our country can frame sentences like the above one by employing the word formation technique of reduplication on the acronym ‘BIRDEM’. Again, in a sentence like ‘Montrir SKOPpriti dekhari moto’, we see that the transliterated acronym ‘SKOP’ has been compounded with the Bangla word ‘Preeti’ yielding the hybrid form ‘SKOPpreeti’ meaning ‘love for SKOP’. So, it is noticeable that some acronyms in Bangla because of their high-frequency use and familiarity have achieved almost lexicalized status. Another factor is at work behind this integration of English acronyms into the fabric of Bangla. This is the temporal length of the acronym. The

older the acronym, the better chances for its assimilation with the borrowing language. Acronyms like 'BUET', 'SKOP' and 'DuDaC' enjoy high frequency use in Bangla – 'BUET' for its academic excellence and prestige; 'SKOP' for its role in the industrial sector of the country and 'DuDaC' for its countrywide anti-corruption drives.

#### **Final Taxonomy of Acronyms in Bangla**

At the beginning of the 'Discussion' section, we have traced four types of acronyms in Bangla. Based on our data and the subsequent discussion, we can further categorize the English loan acronyms in Bangla into the following types –

**Lexicalized Acronyms** –These are kinds of democratic acronyms with almost all Banglophones having access and command over them. For example, IRRI (dhan). Some other examples of this group attested by our data are WASA, BUET, CUCSU, DUCSU etc.

**Transliterated Acronyms** –The building blocks of these acronyms are pure native materials but for the convenience of pronunciation their acronymized forms are written in the Roman script. One example of this type present in our data is SKOP (Sramaik Karmachari Oikiya Parishad).

**Hybrid Acronyms** –There are some acronyms which are composed of bilingual elements. For example, DuDaC (Durniti Daman Commission). As this acronym is formed through the fusion of Bangla and English elements, we dub this as a 'Hybrid acronym'.

**Janus Acronyms** –There are some curious acronyms which when written in Bangla script are pronounced as words but when these are written in Roman script, they are pronounced as individual letters. Examples are ChaSiK (Chattogram City Corporation. In English the shortened form is CCC). The case with ChaMeK (Chattogram Medical College – CMC) is identical. Other examples are RaSiK, KhuSiK, Dhamek etc.

Our data have attested the presence of these sub-classes of acronyms – Global, Local, Indigenous (Calqued and Transliterated), Resemanticized, Lexicalized, Transliterated, Hybridized and Janus acronyms.

## English Acronymic Loans in Bangla

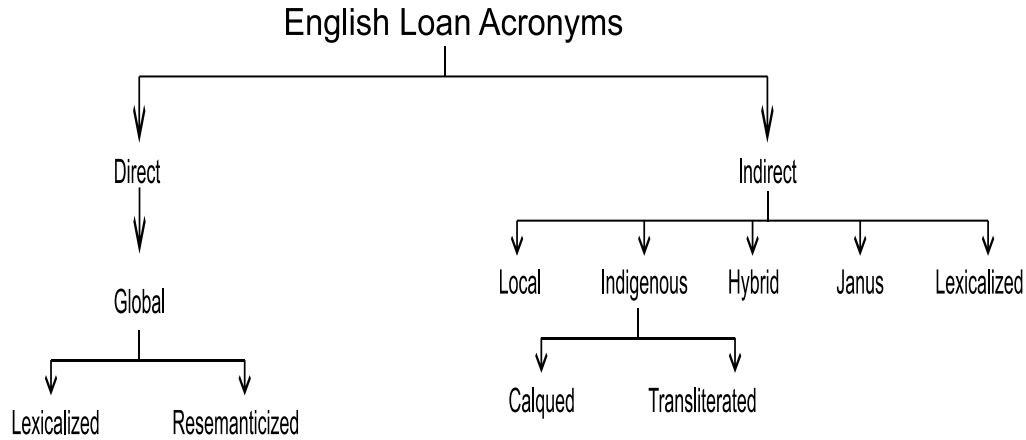


Figure 02: Proposed Taxonomy Model of English Acronyms in Bangla

### Findings

Based on our observations in the above discussion, the following are our findings –

1. Bangla has widespread use of borrowed acronymized words from English.
2. The analysis of the collected data have revealed that we have the following types of English or English-induced acronyms in Bangla – Global Acronyms, Local acronyms, Indigenous Acronyms (Calqued and Transliterated Acronyms), Resemanticized or Reinterpreted Acronyms, Lexicalized Acronyms, Janus Acronyms and Hybridized Acronyms.
3. Despite the significant presence of Global Acronyms, Local Acronyms have started to assume a preponderant status in Bangla.
4. Like their English counterparts, acronyms in Bangla can be written with dots and without dots between letters. But these days, Bangla shows a clear preference to write acronyms without dots between the letters.
5. Bangla, in the construction of acronyms, follows the English rule of omitting non-lexical items.
6. English or English-induced acronyms in Bangla can participate in both Non-concatenative and Concatenative morphological processes. They can be inflected, can be affixed and can be reduplicated, among other morphological processes.
7. A few English acronyms can undergo partial phonological change and full semantic change in Bangla.

8. In complete harmony with the English language, negative-sounding acronyms are avoided in Bangladesh
9. Some acronyms in Bangla, because of their frequent use in the media, have achieved almost lexicalized status.

**Acronyms: Boons or Banes?**

As the issue of the cross-lingual popularity of acronyms crops up in any discussion on them, we need to answer the query what makes acronyms so popular? This can be attributed to the catchiness of their forms. Apart from catchiness, there are other attributes of acronyms. The most important one is the mnemonic quality of the initials. They can aid the memory and makes it possible for people to remember complex names or things. The mnemonic side of acronyms is intensified by the time-saving capacity of the initials. In addition to these, there are some other advantages of acronyms as well. Let us think of the re-creations or re-interpretations of acronyms. They can serve some literary purposes side by side performing pragmatic functions. Last but not the least, the utilitarian value of acronyms is of significant importance in modern times. Encoding of messages through acronyms is a global phenomenon, both in the military and civil domains. The internet revolution and electronic communication, to be precise, have taken acronyms to insurmountable heights.

Acronyms by the way of their distinctive manner of encoding messages, can contribute to the preservation of historical facts. Let us think of the case of the most used acronym in the contemporary world, Covid-19. The year of the outbreak of the pandemic has been succinctly packed into the alpha-numeric acronym. Another example that confirms that acronyms are not only of linguistic value, they have other values too, is the word GOLF. Zerkina et al point out that ‘Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden’, the expansion of GOLF, reflect that there was prohibition on the participation of women in the game (138). In this way acronyms are linguistic capsules containing vital information of historical importance. They embody archaic societal features conveying the realities of past epochs.

Acronyms, however, are not unmixed blessings for us. They pose some problems for the users of languages. The major difficulty of acronyms is in the semantic field. Meanings of words created through the use of mainstream word formation techniques can be easily deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts. But there is a significant hurdle in this case in acronyms. Unless one is fully aware of the components that contribute to the creation of the acronym, it is impossible to decode the meaning.

This semantic difficulty apart, the advantages of acronyms far outweigh the disadvantages. The catchy form, the memory-aiding quality, the time-savvy form and the freewheeling creativity of acronyms have placed them at a great height of cross-lingual popularity.

**Conclusion**

Acronyms have been found to be cross-linguistically present and operational. With their origin traced in the antiquity, weathering millennial waves, they have emerged even stronger. The

### English Acronymic Loans in Bangla

world wars ended their infancy and the internet revolution and electronic communication have taken the letter words to an insurmountable height. As they have reached a robust prime, acronyms have become highly productive yielding innumerable offspring. Their productivity and global popularity have contributed to the erasure of their status as products of non-morphemic process. Despite the recognition of the fact that acronymization is a somewhat low-profile word-formation technique, it shows remarkable performance in Bangla. Morphologically speaking, some acronyms can be inflected to form plurals. Some others can be prefixed and suffixed. Some acronyms can also take different case endings in Bangla. Some are also open to non-concatenative processes such as reduplication.

Bangla has readily embraced many unaltered acronyms from English. The users of Bangla, however, have not left the lexical transaction at the mere stage of blind borrowing. They have shown great creativity in utilizing the technique by moulding, remoulding and adapting it to the linguistic milieu of Bangla. This adaptability and creativity is manifest in the creation of new types of shortening like 'Local Acronyms', 'Re-semanticized Acronyms', 'Janus Acronyms', 'Hybridized Acronyms' and 'Indigenous Acronyms'. The versatility of acronymic loan acceptance and new acronymic class creations can contribute significantly to the future studies of acronyms and their global typologization.

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