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DIGITS IN TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION SHORTENINGS

У статті розглянуто особливості такого способу словотвору як скорочення з цифровими символами в англійській мові, які широко використовують у процесі комунікації за допомогою техніки. Описано функції цифрових символів та специфічні механізми скорочення. Розглянуто лінгвістичний статус лексем, утворених шляхом скорочення за допомогою цифрових символів.
Ключові терміни: акроніми, комунікація за допомогою техніки, скорочення, словотвір, цифрові символи.

В статье рассматриваются особенности такого способа словообразования как сокращения с цифровыми символами в английском языке, которые часто используют в процессе коммуникации с помощью техники. Подано описание функций цифровых символов и специфические механизмы сокращения. Рассматривается лингвистический статус лексем, созданных с помощью цифровых символов.
Ключевые термины: акронимы, коммуникация с помощью техники, сокращение, словообразование, цифровые символы.

The article deals with the features of shortenings with the help of digits in the English language technology-mediated discourse. Digits functions and specific shortening methods were described. Linguistic status of lexemes shortened with the help of digits was also studied.
Key terms: acronyms, technology-mediated discourse, shortening, word-formation, digits.

The development of new technology of every generation gives rise to the development of new rules that govern the language and as David Crystal pointed out: "it has immediate linguistic consequences" [4, p. 228]. It demands new knowledge and skills as well as new ideas and methods. This primarily concerns word-building processes.

Present article is dedicated to the study of English language shortenings formed with the help of digits that are used in technology-mediated discourse. The problem of identification of their linguistic status and functions of digits are the core of our investigation.

Seething development of telephone and computer-mediated state-of-the-art communication technologies demands rules of the language to adapt accordingly to needs of the time. These technologies are nowadays the most efficient ways to quickly communicate. The new forms of written communication include texting, online chat, instant messaging, email, blogs, newsgroup postings, etc. Texters, users, gamers and computer-programmers are gradually changing the rules of word-building, thus creating new semantics due to certain constraints of time and space. Almost all the words are shortened, phrases and sentences are abbreviated, and sound structure is changed. This determines the topicality of the study.

It goes without saying that such a development gave start to a comprehensive study of technology-mediated discourse by linguists from the point of view of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. Text/online/instant messages and emails are considered to be pragmatic phenomenon in scholarly literature. Their forms and functions are continually being modified from simple interpersonal communications to the vivid ones with graphics, pictures and photos. Text messages, for example, "are also increasingly being used to interact with automated systems (e.g. buying products, participating in television contests, recruiting voters). One interesting 'convergence' phenomenon is the use of short messaging services with interactive television, which confuses the boundary between interpersonal and broadcast messaging. As is usually the case, the technology is being continually transformed" [9].

Among the researches dedicated to cyber language are those of Sproull & Kiesler, Baron, Cherny, Crystal, Werry and others. Texting attracted attention of Bergs, Herring, López Rúa, Kul, etc. Their studies not only focus on structural and discourse oriented features, but demonstrate how widely it is implemented in numerous spheres of life such as business and commerce (Hsu, Wang and Wen), medicine (Robinson, et al.), media (Enli), etc.

The term "shortening" is a neutral term for all forms of lexical shortening strategies. Shortenings in the sense of this study are all lexemes that are formed with the help of fewer characters than the full form of a word, combination of words or a sentence. Initialisms, clippings, contractions, letter/number homophones, phonetic spellings, and word-value characters are the categories that cover the types of shortenings used in the technology-mediated communication.

2BZ4UQT is only one of the miscellaneous examples of online jargon taken from the Lingo Dictionary, which means "Too Busy For You Cutey". This is a vivid example of how different word-building methods are merging when creating a new form (2 is a homophone number substitution of the word "too", BFY – is an acronym for a phrase "Busy For You", while Q and T are the letter homophones to the corresponding syllables [ˈkjuː] and [tɪ]).

Unusual letter and number combinations are particularly interesting. According to Markus Bieswanger they are "among the most salient features of text messaging" [3]. They are obviously used for the sake of shortening and codification, which is determined by a concise nature of technology-mediated communications. Shortening is primarily a feature of "Textspeak" [5, p. 179] while codification is more adamant to Leetspeak (variants of spelling: "leet", "lite", "elite", "eleet", "1337", "3l337", "l33t", "3l33t"). The term "leetspeak" could also be written as "!337$p34k" ("!" is used instead of the letter L, "3" looks like a backwards letter E, and "7" is the letter T, etc.).

To investigate this phenomenon more thoroughly we will base our study on different lists of abbreviations and dictionaries available on the Internet, namely Netlingo dictionary, Abbreviations.com, Health Care, Business, Training, Medical, Military, Technical, Funny Acronyms, Backronyms and Abbreviations, Dictionary of Custom License Plate Names, Girls Forum Acronyms. However, this is list could be extended with, for example, Text talk abbreviations,

Texting Abbreviations And Twitter Slang Translation Dictionary, Commonly Used SMS Abbreviations, different lists of gamers' slang. There is even a so-called Urban Dictionary – "a Web-based dictionary of slang words which contained over 6 million definitions as of October 2011. Submissions are regulated by volunteer editors and rated by site visitors" [10]. The very fact of existence of different dictionaries of this type testifies that there is no single attitude to coining new words within technology-mediated discourse and that there exists considerable ambiguity when interpreting the meanings of shortenings.

As a result of a selection of words formed with the help of digits it was revealed that digits can be a part of shortenings that stand for the whole sentences, collocations and single words. Moreover, they have different functions that can be observed in the *Table 1* hereafter:

0 – Letter "O" (w00t We Own the Other Team), Combination "00" substitutes sound "u:" (d00d dude).

1 – Digit "1" (1-to-1 1:1), Cardinal numeral substitution based on homophony "one" (14AA41 One For All And All For One), Ordinal numeral substitution "First" (1LT First Lieutenant), Syllable substitution based on homophony (every1 everyone), Part of a syllable substitution based on homophony (1CE Once), Personal pronoun "I" substitution based on visual similarity (1DR I wonder), Past participle of "win" substitution based on homophony ("won").

2 – Letter "Z", Digit "2" (Y2K Year 2000), Cardinal numeral "two", Ordinal numeral substitution "2nd" (A2LD Alternative Second Level Domain), Adverb "twice" (RTQ² Read The Question Twice), Preposition and adverb "to", adverb "too" (2G2BT Too good to be true), Part of a syllable substitution based on homophony (2TH tooth), Syllable substitution based on partial similarity of pronunciation (2LY truly).

3 – Letters "E" (l33t elite) and "Z", Combination "|3" stands for letter "B", Cardinal numeral "Three", Ordinal numeral "Third" substitution (3GPP Third Generation Partnership Project), Adjective "triple" (3BL Triple Bottom Line), Part of a syllable is substituted by a part of a pronunciation pattern (3dom freedom), Part of a graphical image – combination <3 substitutes "heart" (sweet<3 sweetheart), Shorthand manner indicating the number of words with a common initial letter repetition (E3 Electronic Entertainment Expo).

4 – Letter "A" (m4d mad), Cardinal numeral "four", Preposition "for" (S4L Spam For Life) and conjunction "for" (P2U4URAQTP Peace To You For You Are A Cutie Pie), Syllable substitution based on homophony (thr4 therefore).

5 – Letter "S" (5x1llz skills), Digit "5" (5FS 5 Finger Salute), Cardinal numeral "five" (Hi 5/^5 High Five), Part of a syllable is substituted by a part of a pronunciation pattern (5n fine).

6 – Letter "G", Noun "sex" based on similarity of pronunciation (CU46 See You For Sex), Syllable substitution based on homophony (BA6 basics), Syllable substitution based on partial similarity of pronunciation (6S success).

7 – Letter "T" (3l337 elite).

8 – Cardinal numeral "eight", Verb "eat" in Past Simple (OICU812 Oh I See, You Ate One Too), part of a syllable substitution based on homophony (AAR8 At Any Rate), Ending and beginning of the two neighbouring syllables substitution based on homophony (word segment substitution) (sk8er/sk8r skater).

9 – Digit "9" (CD9 Code 9, which refers to "parent in room"), Syllable substitution based on homophony (K9 Canine), Part of a syllable is substituted by a part of a pronunciation pattern (f9/fi9 fine).

10 – Digit "10" (BI10 Back In 10 minutes), Cardinal numeral "ten" (G10 Group of Ten), Syllable substitution based on homophony (B10 = beaten), Part of a syllable substitution based on partial similarity of pronunciation (10X thanks, X-I-10 Exciting).

There are also a number of other digits used in such lexemes (e.g., 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 33, 36, 40). They are mostly used to indicate the number of words with a common initial letter repetition (P40 Procedural Practices and Protocols Permitting, Perspicuous Persistent Painstaking Proper Prior Planning and Purposeful Patient Preparation Potentially Promotes and Predicates Perfect Pristine Perspective, Principally Presenting Positive and Precise Performance, Perhaps Preventing, Primarily, Problematic, Pernicious Piss Poor Perfunctory Projects and Production Processes, and Perennially Plummeting Pre-tax Profits, Period).

There does not exist a single commonly accepted term that could be assigned to the lexemes formed by shortening with the help of letters and digits. C. Thurlow terms these digits as "letter-number homophones" [8, p. 20] (though digits are not homophones of letters, but of the whole words), D. Crystal calls such neologisms as "letter-plus-number combinations" [4, p. 85] and compares them with "rebuses", J. Munat understands such combinations as "phonetic shorthand" [6, p. 165], O.L. Harmash refers to them as "a result of creolization" [1], and S.M. Fesenko considers them to be "abbreviations with digital symbols" [2, p. 195]. There is a general tendency to name shortenings combining digits and letters as acronyms. However, the newly formed lexemes are far from the prototypical view of an acronym that is "a word formed from the first letters of a group of words" [7, p. 11], as digits substitute not only the beginning letters of words (w00t – We Own the Other Team), but are also used instead of sounds ("u:" in d00d – dude), cardinal and ordinal numbers (Hi 5/^5 – High Five; 3GPP – Third Generation Partnership Project), syllables (K9 – Canine), part of a syllable (AAR8 – At Any Rate), part of a syllable with similar, not identical pronunciation (10X -–thanks), words ("I", "too", "for", etc.). Digits are also used in combination with other symbols to form a graphical image (sweet<3 – sweetheart), to indicate a number of words with the same beginning letter (E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo), and as a code with a hidden meaning (CD9 – Code 9 "parent in room"). Thus, we may refer to them as shortenings formed with the help of functionally, phonetically and visually motivated substitutions of letters, sounds, syllables, word segments and words with digits.

Judging from the above mentioned we can conclude that the lexemes formed with the help of digits are definitely examples of shortening; however, there is a considerable deviation from the standard word-formation rules that have been known and widely used so far. These rules are mostly violated and obviously are expected to be reformulated in future. This cannot be explained exceptionally by the concise form of text types and a rebellious nature of internet generations thriving to pose new semantics and forms to the existing notions and give the names to the new ones. It is a complex process of merging new ideas, new trends, digital era consequences, simplification, innovation and creativity which is

being shaped from the need to be concise to the need to be original and puzzling. Though being considerably confusing, it is definitely not a threat to the language, but a signal that it might overcome one more stage of its development. Therefore, it is important not to criticize but to be flexible and get involved by implementing these new trends into the educational process which needs to be constantly updated.

In perspective it would be interesting to monitor the spheres which make use of this type of modern shortening strategies, for example, for coining trademarks and brand names and their pragmatic value.

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