PRAGMATIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This article examines English abbreviations used in social media discourse, including LOL, IMO, BTW, OMG and IMHO, and their functional counterparts in Uzbek. A qualitative pragmatic and semantic approach is used to distinguish the meanings of the expanded expressions from the interpersonal and discourse functions of their shortened forms. The discussion identifies emotional and expressive uses, epistemic stance marking, discourse organisation and the expression of group affiliation. It also distinguishes direct borrowing from functional substitution through laughter representations, interjections and established Uzbek expressions. The analysis suggests that cross-linguistic correspondence is primarily functional and context-sensitive rather than a matter of matching abbreviated forms. Given the limited documentation of the material, the proposed classification is exploratory and does not establish the frequency or predominance of particular functions in Uzbek digital communication.

Keywords: abbreviation, acronym, initialism, pragmatic meaning, discourse marker, social media discourse, borrowing, functional equivalence, digital communication.

Introduction

Linguistic economy is an important feature of digital communication: users may convey propositional content, emotion and interpersonal attitudes through relatively few written characters. Abbreviations offer one means of achieving this economy. English forms such as *LOL* (laughing out loud), *IMO* (in my opinion), *BTW* (by the way), *OMG* (oh my God) and *IMHO* (in my humble opinion) are relevant to the study of online language and its circulation across linguistic boundaries. Crystal's accounts of Internet language and text messaging provide a broader context for examining these practices [1, 2].

These forms can perform functions that extend beyond the literal meanings of their expanded expressions. For example, *LOL* may accompany an informal or affiliative message without necessarily reporting audible laughter. Such uses require attention to the relationship between an expression and the exchange in which it occurs. Research on instant messaging likewise provides an empirical basis for treating digital language as a contextually organised form of communication [5].

The aim of this article is to examine the pragmatic and semantic functions of selected English abbreviations and their Uzbek counterparts. The analysis addresses three questions: what communicative functions do these forms perform; how are they borrowed or replaced in Uzbek digital interaction; and to what extent are the correspondences between the two languages structural or functional?

Conceptual framework and method

Here, *abbreviation* is an umbrella term for shortened written forms. A narrower distinction separates acronyms, pronounced as words, from initialisms, pronounced as sequences of letters. The written examples alone do not establish how individual users pronounce them. Consequently, *LOL*, *IMO*, *BTW* and similar forms are referred to collectively as abbreviations, without assuming that they all belong to the same pronunciation-based category.

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The material consists of selected English and Uzbek examples from comment and chat genres on public social media platforms, identified in the study as Telegram, Instagram and X. Pragmatic analysis considers the communicative role of each form; componential analysis distinguishes the meaning of the expanded expression from associated connotations; and contextual and contrastive analysis compares possible functions across the two languages. This orientation is compatible with computer-mediated discourse analysis, which grounds interpretations of online behaviour in linguistic evidence [3].

The study is qualitative and exploratory. The sampling period, number of messages, distribution across platforms and complete contextual extracts are not reported. The material therefore supports an illustrative classification rather than statistical conclusions about English or Uzbek users. Functional labels may overlap: a form can organise discourse while also conveying an attitude or maintaining interpersonal rapport. Schiffrin's account of discourse markers supports examining semantic, pragmatic and interactional dimensions together [4].

Pragmatic functions

Emotional and expressive functions

LOL, *OMG* and *LMAO* can contribute an emotional or expressive dimension to a message. *LMAO* expands to "laughing my ass off" and carries a more explicitly informal and potentially vulgar register. Possible Uzbek counterparts of *LOL* include written laughter forms such as *hhh*, *xaxa* and *hahaha*. These are graphic representations of laughter, not acronyms or transliterations of the English abbreviation. For *OMG*, interjections such as *voy* or *yo'g'-e* may provide contextually appropriate responses. The correspondence is functional; its suitability depends on whether the message conveys amusement, surprise, disbelief or another reaction.

Epistemic and evaluative functions

IMO and *IMHO* frame an utterance as a personal opinion, while *AFAIK* (as far as I know) qualifies the speaker's knowledge. Uzbek expressions such as *menimcha* and *nazarimda* can mark a viewpoint, and *bilishimcha* can indicate limited knowledge. These expressions may soften commitment or disagreement, although their effect depends on the surrounding exchange. *TBH* (to be honest), corresponding to *rostini aytsam*, primarily presents the following statement as a candid assessment. Its stance-marking role should therefore be distinguished from topic management.

Discourse organisation and phatic functions

BTW introduces a side topic or an additional point; *aytgancha* offers a comparable Uzbek resource. *FYI* (for your information) frames information as relevant to the recipient and may correspond to *ma'lumot uchun*. Phatic uses maintain social contact or rapport, as when a laughter marker sustains a friendly exchange. This function should be identified from context rather than assigned automatically to every discourse marker.

Group affiliation and identity

Familiar abbreviations can signal participation in an online community. Borrowed forms such as *LOL* and *OMG* may therefore express social affiliation in Uzbek interaction, consistent with research on affiliation in social media [6]. However, claims about young users or specific identity motives require demographic and interactional evidence beyond these examples.

Table 1. English abbreviations and possible Uzbek counterparts

Form	Expansion	Uzbek counterpart	Possible function
LOL	laughing out loud	*hhh, xaxa*	Laughter, affect or affiliation

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Form	Expansion	Uzbek counterpart	Possible function
OMG	oh my God	*voy, yo'g'-e*	Surprise or disbelief
IMO / IMHO	in my opinion / in my humble opinion	*menimcha, nazarimda*	Personal viewpoint or stance
BTW	by the way	*aytgancha*	Topic shift or addition
TBH	to be honest	*rostini aytsam*	Candour or evaluation
FYI	for your information	*ma'lumot uchun*	Framing relevant information

Note. Counterparts depend on context; functional categories may overlap.

Discussion

Table 1 illustrates several kinds of correspondence between the two languages. Direct borrowing retains an English form, as in *LOL* or *OMG*. Functional substitution uses a different type of expression to achieve a comparable effect, as when written laughter accompanies an amused response. Established Uzbek expressions can also convey stance or organise discourse without reproducing the abbreviated English form. These strategies may coexist within the same community or exchange.

The proposed counterparts should not be treated as fixed translations. *Yo'g'-e*, for example, can express disbelief and does not reproduce every use of *OMG*. Likewise, *LOL* may suggest amusement, irony, embarrassment or mitigation, depending on its placement and the surrounding message. Such readings are contextual possibilities rather than separate meanings that can be assigned automatically to the form. Pragmatic interpretation supplements the lexical explanation; it does not require assuming that the original meaning has disappeared in every occurrence.

The examples also do not demonstrate that Uzbek grammatical structure prevents abbreviation. Agglutination and word order may be considered when investigating differences in word formation, but they cannot by themselves explain the choice between a borrowed form and a full Uzbek expression. Platform conventions, familiarity with English, the intended audience and established community practices are alternative factors that require empirical investigation. Similarly, claims that emotional abbreviations are borrowed more readily than modal or organisational forms would need comparable frequency data.

Transliteration should be distinguished from the strategies actually illustrated here. It involves representing a written form in another script. The laughter strings *hhh* and *xaxa* do not establish that an English abbreviation has been transliterated. Demonstrating transliteration or another type of graphic adaptation would require attested examples showing the relationship between the source form and its representation.

Limitations and implications

The principal limitation is the restricted and incompletely documented material. No annotated corpus of Uzbek digital interaction is used to establish frequency, distribution or the relative importance of the proposed functions. This limitation concerns the present study and should not be interpreted as evidence that no relevant Uzbek digital resource exists. A larger analysis would need a defined collection period, transparent inclusion criteria, contextualised extracts and a consistent procedure for assigning overlapping pragmatic functions.

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The distinction between literal expansion and contextual function can inform digital discourse dictionaries and language teaching. Dictionary entries should identify register, possible interactional uses and the conditions under which an Uzbek counterpart is appropriate. Teaching materials can similarly explain why recognising an abbreviation's expanded form does not always suffice to interpret its use. Future corpus development could support the systematic testing of these observations.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that English social media abbreviations can combine lexical meaning with emotional, epistemic, organisational and interpersonal functions. Their Uzbek counterparts may take the form of direct borrowings, written laughter, interjections or established lexical expressions. Functional equivalence is therefore a more useful starting point than formal similarity alone.

These observations support a context-sensitive approach to abbreviation use in bilingual digital communication. They do not establish a uniform shift from denotative meaning to discourse-marker status, nor the predominance of any one function across Uzbek social media. The proposed classification offers a basis for further research supported by a more fully documented body of data.

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