MICUs, Componyms and the Triple Articulation of Cyber Language.

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Résumé

Cet article tente de clarifier le statut linguistique d'un nouveau type d'acronymes complexes, actuellement en usage dans la variété de langage connue sous le label de cyber-English. La structure particulière de ces néologies nous semble unique, car elle est formée d'unités intermédiaires entre les phonèmes et les monèmes, et implique de ce fait, une triple articulation du langage dont personne, à notre humble connaissance, n'a encore rendu compte de façon explicite. De plus, la structure extrêmement réduite de ces néologies qui peut inclure aussi bien des lettres, des graphes que des chiffres, peut représenter des phrases complètes et complexes regroupant toutes les parties du discours. Nous avons nommé ces néologies « componyms », et les parties individuelles mais solidaires dont elles sont formées « MICUs » ou Minimal Informational Cooperative Units. Dans cet article, nous tentons d'expliquer d'une part, la nature de l'innovation apportée par les utilisateurs de cyber-English aux mécanismes classiques de créativité lexicale, et, d'autre part, nous essayons de mettre en lumière l'intrusion de la triple articulation du langage dans le processus d'énonciation. Cette dernière a une double fonction : accroître l'économie du langage, tout en augmentant les limites linguistiques de la communication humaine.

Mots-clés : néologie – économie – MICUs – componyms – triple articulation du langage.

MICUs, Componyms, and the Triple Articulation of Cyber Language.

Human language has always been considered as the cornerstone of the divide between man and other beings. At the

basis of this divide, is the double articulation of language which markedly distinguishes human language from the rest of all types of languages, including the programming languages. As a linguistic operational concept, Double Articulation has received the closest attention of linguists and other scholars who have always taken it for granted. The works of André Martinet (1985, 1998) and those of the members of the Prague School are quite illustrative of this interest. However, the extent to which this concept remains valid for the analysis of cyber language in general and cyber English in particular has been overlooked because the issue of Double Articulation is still considered as peripheral in the research related to electronic language. Unless the complexity of this computer mediated type of language is given full consideration, we will continue to neglect the intricate manner in which it is articulated. In the following, we would argue that as an innovative type of discourse developed by the abundant virtual communities that populate the web, cyber English is based on units other than phonemes. The phenomenon we shall discus now consists in the formation of new linguistic units built on a basis other than the usual double articulation as defined by André Martinet. Indeed, neologies like 'ASCIIbetical order', 'greped', 'laserize', 'ROT 13', 'FAQlist', 'B4U come', etc, show quite clearly that they are not formed from another type of minimal units which we label MICUs or Minimal Informational Cooperative Units as shall be discussed further. The neologies resulting from the combination of MICUs we name componyms, for we discriminate between componyms and acronyms.

For clarity purposes, we start by drawing a plain distinction between integrated acronyms commonly used in ordinary English, and MICUs which are more specific to the electronic space. To start with, an acronym is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary 1989 simply as 'a word formed from the initial letters of other words'[1], précising though, that some new forms combine the initial syllables instead of initial letters as in the case of Amvets (American Veteran's Association), adding that 'they still are in the spirit of acronyming'. A point we should

like to discuss further on. Some scholars like David Crystal distinguish initials which ‘are spoken as individual letters like BBC, DJ, etc., from acronyms ‘which are pronounced as single words, such as NATO, laser, etc’. Items which ‘would never have periods separating the letters – a contrast with initialisms, where punctuation is often present[2]’. André Crépin (1994) considers acronyms as ‘the extreme form of abbreviation. e.g. MP (Member of Parliament)’. Crépin precises that in acronyms,

The letters are not read successively, one after the other, but they form a whole word. The Royal Air Force /rɔiəl ɛə fɔ:s/ becomes the acronym [RAF]. Acronyms make it possible to play on two meanings: that of the words represented by the initials and that of the word carried by the new whole. e.g. the PEN club groups Poets, Essayists, and Novelists[3] .

Another distinction which proves of a valuable interest for us is that of the French linguist Jean Tournier (1989)who considers acronyms and initials as being the result of the same lexicogenic process, but who discriminates them on pronunciation grounds. Tournier considers that in an initialism,

The item is pronounced letter by letter when it does not respect the morpho-phonemic constraint imposed upon words. e.g. FLCM (Fellow of the London College of Music), but when it constitutes a whole that fits an existing morpho-phonological model, it becomes an acronym and can be pronounced exactly as an ordinary word (OPEC, UNESCO) etc[4].

Conversely, a MICU can be defined as an autonomous linguistic unit functioning as the initial of a *word*, but which, being in a contiguous association with other MICUs, evolves into a more complex acronym we name componym. A componym may, in its turn also combine with a given lexicogenic device to evolve into a higher order componym. As an illustration, a componym like FAQ list is a linguistic unit which results from the combination of the MICUs (FAQ Frequently Asked Questions) and the lexicogenic process of compounding (the addition of *list* to FAQ). It is worth signalling that the two types are not easily differentiated because an

acronym is similar to a componym in that they are both composed of a certain number of initials which, threaded together by usage, form a whole considered as a linguistic unit. Yet, while an acronym is only built from the combination of initials of words, the componym involves the addition on the syntagmatic axis, of other elements like affixes, compounds or other lexicogenic processes impelled by the paradigmatic requirements of the situation of communication. Componyms are thus, the neologies which result from this complexification, and their articulation requires not only the double articulation of language as elaborated by André Martinet[5] (1998), but also a 'triple articulation of language' as shall be argued now.

In Martinet's conceptualisation[6], when a particular speaker wishes to express, through language, a particular experience they have about the world, they need to represent it in words, or to use Martinet's terminology, in 'monemes', those units of a sentence which the linguist considers as the smallest meaningful units of language. However, monemes, as long as they are not actually uttered out of the speaker's mouth in the form of coherent string of speech sounds, remain totally absent from the hearer's perception. Therefore, to be audibly communicated to the other, the speaker resorts to the second articulation of language, consisting in the individual articulation of the smallest contrastive units labelled phonemes. The phonemes are pronounced one after the other in an intelligible and structured manner (monemes) so to trigger in the hearer's mind, the expected representation.

In our conceptualisation, the articulation of the experience to be communicated is manifested in three distinct planes instead of two: like in Martinet's, the first plane concerns the ordering in the speaker's mind of the experience to be communicated into meaningful units. The second plane concerns the linear amalgamation of other monemes into a genuine configuration to form a larger coherent structure, the componym, represented by the initials of each moneme concerned. Only then does the third articulation, the one involving the effective pronunciation of

MICUs, sounding like phonemes, take over. In other words, the first articulation is the same in both conceptualisations, but in our view, the second articulation is the intruding one, occupying the virtual free space where the MICUs combine contiguously with a lexicogenic process to form componyms. The combination may involve either a derivational, affixional or any other lexicogenic process. The third articulation then, consists in the physical articulation of the MICUs which occurs between the articulation of the monemes and that of the phonemes. It concerns the moment when the units of the first articulation are formed in the mind and grouped into the larger units we have labelled componyms. The physical articulation of MICUs totally subsumes that of phonemes and this gives way to the confusion between MICUs and phonemes. The confusion rises from the remarkable similarity between the pronunciation of MICUs and that of phonemes. This is due to the fact that MICUs as well as phonemes strictly conform to the phonetico-phonological rules of the English language and MICUs are thus perceived as if they were phonemes combining to form ordinary lexical units. In fact, their natures are utterly different.

To illustrate this process, let us suppose that a person who had witnessed a laser operation, later reports: 'I saw the surgeon laserize the liver to remove the tumour'. We can now examine the cognitive and the linguistic activities involved by the use of the verb to *laserize*. First, the witness amalgamates his/her external experience into linguistic units representing the object of his observation which, here, concerns the use of a laser apparatus by a surgeon seeking to remove a tumour. The linguistic units are the components of the complex word laser, which unlike phonemes are initials of lexical units that do not appear in the utterance. These lexical units are successively: light (represented by L); amplification (represented by A); by stimulated (represented by S); emulsion (represented by E); and of radiation (represented by R). They from a whole sentence implied without being articulated, and they combine with the suffix *ise* to form the componym *laserise*. We call a componym,

the amalgamation of a complex linguistic unit, whether it is an acronym like laser or not, to which a suffixation device like *ise* for instance is added to build a more complex unit. The representation of the external experience in the form of componyms constitutes, hence, the first articulation.

The second articulation consists in the amalgamation of the individual monemes composing laser, and their reduction into MICUs. In the example mentioned previously, the Verb to laserise is built from the verbalization of the noun laser which is conjugated as if it were an ordinary simple lexical unit, while it is actually as we have seen a complex acronym. Now, let us examine the result of this process whose output, laserise consists of six monemes. These are the words to which every MICU of l.a.s.e.r. refers to plus the suffix 'ise' which, by the same token transforms the status of the word from Noun to Verb. When a certain number of MICUs virtually cooperate to form a componym as is the case here, a triple articulation takes over, that of the individual pronunciation of the MICUs which by now, behave as if they were phonemes. It is the physical utterance of laserise by the use of the organs of speech which constitutes the triple articulation.

As has been shown, the relations between the MICUs which make up a componym involve both 'a syntagmatic and a paradigmatic' dimension to use a Saussurean terminology. The syntagmatic dimension concerns the linear combination under certain conditions of occasional monemes and their reduction to MICUs to build componyms, while the paradigmatic dimension involves the association of the viable occasional elements apt to form acceptable componyms. This new way of coining electronic words by using different but effective lexicogenic processes challenges the habitual linear manner of writing classical words composed of phonemes written from left to right, or of uttering them, raising the pitch at particular syllables and lowering it at others, pausing regularly at the end of each portion of text to respect the rhythm induced by meaning and punctuation. Here the rhythm is not imposed by the movement of the lungs breathing air in and out, but by the capacity to optimise

meaning and its communication by resorting to all devices made available by the mouse and keyboard, hence, the ever increasing use of abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons. These novel processes consist in the association, under particular circumstances, of some linguistic forms with other units, whether linguistic or not, producing thereof new types of lexical units. As an illustration of such combinations, (B4 U come, CUL8er, ASCIIbetical order, FAQ list, @party, ROT13, etc.). These processes, as long as they consist in unusual associations rendered possible by the flexibility of the electronic support, increase the number of paradigmatic associations and undeniably favour network thinking, since they force the mind to establish links between entities that would not have been connected together otherwise. Steven Johnson points out that given its power to draw connections between things and thus, to forge semantic relationships, 'the link plays a conjunctive role, binding together disparate ideas in digital prose[7]'. The componym, just like Johnson's link seen as a synthetic device, becomes the locus for new types of linguistic relationships to dwell.

The philosophical issue to be discussed now relates to the apprehension of the external world, and its representation in language either in speech or in writing. From a historical viewpoint, the question of the relationship between the 'objects' of the external world and our apprehension of them through the mediation of language has always been of great concern in philosophical and epistemological enquiry, and of course has always been a crucial issue in linguistic and semiotic studies. The Greek thinkers were among the first ones to reflect upon the status of the mediation between the world outside and the language used to represent it, and to question the nature of this mediation. The challenge was and still remains that of providing an alternative elucidation to the virtual capacity of a fixed linear text to contain an abstract meaning linking readers to other texts, to the intimate world of the author as well as to the world of things in the outer world, as often as the text is actualised by a reader.

Our personal understanding of the new type of writing commonly used by online communities in the variety known as cyber-English clearly challenges the supposed fixity of writing whose invention had, Walter Ong reminds us 'separated the knower from known'. The cyber sign as we understand increases this distance because of the specific nature of the cyber sign. Indeed, the latter is more than a simple inscription. As a sign, it is also a sign of another sign, since, as a sign, it stands for something else. But an electronic sign is more than a sign of a sign since it combines with other signs (embedded signs) to form a coherent whole labelled componym. This means that the cyber sign entails a double representation albeit appearing as if it were only one. As for example a person's representation of Magritte's pipe which would be entitled 'This is not Magritte's pipe.'[8] The Saussurean sign, because it is built on a dyadic relationship between the signifier and the signified remains unable to account for the double representation capable of continuous evolution which the cyber sign in general and the componym in particular both display.

If, then, following Pierre Lévy[9], we consider a text (and therefore any formatted piece of language from a single lexical item up to any type of elaborate writing) as a virtuality which takes value only through its actualisation, then the text depends as much on the author who encodes it as on the reader who proceeds to decode it. The new challenge for the reader is to actualise a text which has undergone several layers of coding but which (because of the linearity imposed by traditional written surfaces) still appears as if it had only one layer. With cyber-English, the layers of codes are represented by MICUs, and the text as a whole in the form of componyms. Yet although the keys are indicated by the MICUs to find one's way through the maze of componyms, the intention of the author may still remain 'beyond the text' and the reader may fail to catch it. This is due as Peirce states, to the fact that 'the universe is perfused with signs'[10], although the nature of these signs is not identical.

After five centuries of print literature, we have become intimately accustomed to reading texts as configurations of

interrelated words on a syntagmatic contiguous axis, and now we shall have to become acquainted with words read as configurations of virtual sentences within a fragmented linearity. The configurations constantly change thus undermining the myth of the 'stable unity' of the analog text, and the readers need to learn how to adapt their sometimes mechanistic type of reading to the new linguistic neologies whenever a componym is to be dynamically actualised in a new context. The reading movement ceases to be exclusively linear. It becomes discontinuous and sinusoidal, requiring additional cognitive activity from the part of the reader. This is the new challenge which the twenty first century reader has to take.

Notwithstanding the differences in appreciation about the capacities of language to faithfully account for the realities of the external world in simple lexemes or in highly complex componyms, one should reckon that a constant problematic issue for humans after the invention of writing has been the discovery of appropriate technologies to devise suitable physical tools likely to fit their storing purposes. The technologies were also to play a decisive role in fashioning the way people think and encode text. The gradual standardisation of writing and much later, the invention of the printing press prompted the duplication and the wide dissemination of information over large geographical and linguistic areas.

The development of print concomitantly brought about important intellectual and social disruptions to people's world views as they became confronted to different visions of the world which gradually questioned theirs. The development of the printing press also brought a standardisation of written languages which, beginning with the standardisation of spelling ultimately constrained also text organisation and book format. The major output was the imposition of the Book format model. This model soon became the standard to be imitated, and by the same token even thinking became modelled on the new patterns imposed by standard spelling, text organisation and book format. Like the clay tablet, the parchment etc., the printed text allowed humans

to store great amounts of information outside themselves in a physically hierarchised support separate from the mind and best represented by the printed book for over five centuries.

Nevertheless, the change incited by the printing press on language was relatively limited in comparison with the changes that languages are witnessing today as a result of the tremendous development of hypermodern explosion of information. When one examines the profound transformations hypertext is bringing to the way in which we habitually think and encode text, one can easily foresee the changes that the electronic text will operate by restructuring the way people use language. As a matter of fact, one of the most important benefits offered by the electronic sign in comparison with the printed text is its hypertextual architecture. Ted Nelson, its inventor, defines hypertext as 'Non-sequential writing with reader controlled links'[11]. In reality, it is the non-linearity of the digital text, as well as the new freedom acquired by a reader who can impose other reading paths and rhythms, which singles it out from the analog text. The electronic sign can be built from words, from images (static or dynamic), from sounds, or from a combination of each. Besides, given its hypertextual aspect, the digital sign easily connects itself with a variety of other signs, including the analog sign, without the habitual spatial constraints of the printed page. Electronic signs allow us to cross a further distance in our intellectual advance towards the conquest of new cognitive resources. When Giles Lipovetsky depicts the move towards the hypermodern condition, he bluntly affirms that "on est passé du règne du fini à l'infini'[12]. The passage is made easier by the electronic word, and more precisely by the componym which permits through its capacity to be fragmented, the embedding of other items such as other words, numbers, graphs or emoticons and the like without losing from its coherence, thus, projecting us into a new dimension.

Perhaps would it be useful to remind the reader of Vannevar Bush's idea of the memex, which can be considered as the closest anticipation of what was to become the hypertext, and

to which the componym may serve as a nucleus or as a minimal structure, in its challenge with the classical 'word'.

The human mind...operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain… A memex is a device in which an individual stores his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to his memory… [13] Almost half a century later, and as a follow-up to Vannevar Bush's appeal to the implementation of the memex, one can appreciate the peremptory response by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the WWW on page 14 of his Weaving the Web, where he declares in an inspired forecast which prefigures the hypermodern text, in which the traditional clear-cut separation between syntax and semantics is properly blurred: 'What matters is the connections. It isn't the letters, it's the way they're strung together into words. It isn't the words, it's the way they're strung together into phrases. It's not the phrases, it's the way they're strung together into a document'[14]. Like for hypertext narrative, the basic concern in the construction of componyms pertains to the conjunctive links one builds with MICUs to create meaning. The context is provided by the specificities of the situation of communication which requires a third order capacity for reflection that caters for economy of expression. In other words, with componyms the reader is invited to re-build the links between the MICUs to work out the meaning of the componym or 'hyperword'. This type of reading is basically dynamical for it appeals to the readers' capacities to renew the links between the MICUs at each step before reaching the overall meaning contained in the componym. Indeed, the combination of MICUs into componyms constitutes a perfect illustration of 'network thinking' or what Ascott defines as

The antithesis of tunnel vision or linear thought. It is an all-at-once perception of a multiplicity of viewpoints, an extension

in all dimensions of associative thought, a recognition of the transience of all hypotheses, the relativity of all knowledge, the impermanence of all perception[15].

However, as coding becomes more complex it allows its author an increased capacity to construct meaning and to communicate it, but it concurrently requires from the reader at least the same capacities for decoding. This of course raises another issue which can be dealt with in another discussion.

A significant precision which should be added now concerning the syntagmatic construction of componyms, is the novelty brought by hypertext links. These links, which fragment the habitual linear construction of syntagms, may concern either a complex syntagmatic construction or a simple coinage, as a link may be inserted even within a simple construction. For example, it is possible to link the individual elements of an acronym to their respective objects to facilitate its comprehension, as in 'The Sysope is working on the D.N.S. @ the moment.[16]' Hyperlinks involving hypermedia are considered as complex syntagmatic constructions in comparison to the simple syntagmatic constructions mentioned above. As an illustration, a sentence like *a bug's already crashed the bogus system* can be hyperlinked to the sound produced by sinking water in a sieve or any other sound that may suggest the crashing of an object. In this respect, componyms resemble hypertexts from the standpoint of their constitutive elements. However, while componyms mainly operate at the level of the word, hypertexts (which can also be the result of a componym operation) mostly operate at the level of the sentence. Therefore, both the conception of componyms and the hypertext links ought to be considered as representative implementations of network thinking since both of them incite the mind to draw adequate relationships between disparate elements which would not fit together in other contexts. As an illustration for such an assertion, let us consider the example of ASCIIbetical order.

On the syntagmatic axis, it is composed of a certain number of elements which can be described as follows on the first syntagmatic level:

American + Standard + Code + for + Information + Interchange + betical + order. A)– As a whole, the coinage is a highly complex lexical unit which fulfils the necessary requirements to be labelled componym, and its elements can be broken down into two distinct components: the first is comprises componym ASCII, compounded with an unusual suffix, 'betical', and the second component is composed of a simple lexical unit, 'order'. The result is ASCIIbetical orderB) – The componym can be broken down into its constitutive components: the MICUs A, S, C, I, I.

C) – The suffix betical can in its turn be broken down into two parts: the clipped element 'betic' from alphabetic and the suffix 'al'. In the last case, the suffix 'al', remains as a sign waiting for an object to be connected with, so as to embody it with an adjectival qualifier meaning 'relating to', or to participate in the formation of a noun denoting verbal action. Other neologies like F.I.S.H.queue or FAQ list are built on similar grounds, except that here the acronym represents a more complex proposition from the syntactic standpoint.

The second syntagmatic layer would comprise all the linear constructions which, like ASCIIbetical conform to the syntactic rules still at play within the Standard English language. It could also involve the insertion of any multimedia type of document whose objects could be accessed and retrieved by a simple click on its hypertext or hypermedia links. These could be underlined in blue, and be highlighted by a pointer device like a mouse. In this way, any click on any element on the syntagms (first or second layer) would thus function on a hypertextual mood, capable of bringing forth remote connections in unpredictable ways.

Each element on the syntagmatic axis on both layers can stand in a one to one term relationship with its correlate on the paradigmatic axis. At the same time, a syntagmatic combination of terms into larger units also finds its correlate within the

paradigmatic axis. As an illustration, a sentence such as "the R.& D. manager, suggests to laserise the I.B.M. piece of hardware before fixing it" would read as: the Ar an Di manager suggests … with a simple mouse click on the graph R, the reader is trans/teleported to the document linked to the graph which explains that R stands for Research and provide further documentation relating to the field of research concerned. Another click on D would perform the same activity and would connect the reader to the document where the word Development and its files are stored. But then, if the reader still finds it difficult to understand the link between research and development, another hypertext R&D would connect the reader to another document explaining the function and use of this service within a given firm. In order to better highlight this point, let us again reconsider the example of ASCIIbetical order:

First, a number of initials capable of fitting together in an appropriate pragmatic context are combined on the syntagmatic axis to form ASCII. The result is the coinage formed from the aggregation of the once disparate elements (A+S+C+I+I) which by now have become MICUs into a coherent whole, the componym ASCII. Each MICU of the componym on the syntagmatic linear axis may be linked to its correlate on the semantic axis by means of a hypertext link. Considering the existence of the alphabetical order which indicates a certain manner of classifying objects by using the disposition of alphabetic letters from A to Z, and taking advantage from the existence of a paradigm already associated with the mental activity of classifying objects of knowledge, one can substitute ASCII, (which is also a form used by computers to organize knowledge), to alpha from alphabet, and add to it the suffix betical to form ASCIIbetical. Eventually, order is added to the new lexical unit to form a complex compound ASCIIbetical order.

A succinct analysis of the cognitive activity devoted to the formation of this coinage perfectly illustrates what is meant by interconnectedness or network thinking since this procedure performs several actions at one time:

- It permits the formation of a new lexical item ASCIIbetical by borrowing a suffix from an established lexical unit. In so doing, it forces the mind to accept the newness of the coinage by pointing to its similarity with a familiar lexical unit (alphabetical) built upon a similar device. This new contiguity results in new meaning (a digital manner of organising knowledge).
- By drawing attention to its familiar counterpart (alphabet) whose paradigmatic contiguity is now brought to the foreground, it both justifies and questions its proper status, because as a coinage it is brought to compete with the already existing term 'alphabetical.'
- By the same token, it deconstructs the process by which the 'simple' lexical unit was built. In the example above, the coinage is not built from the linear combination of alpha + beta from which the last sound was dropped by the well known linguistic device known as apocope to form 'alphabet', but from MICUs to which the suffix 'betical' is added to form a new complex lexical unit, named componym.
- It disrupts the classical way of building words from phonemes (alphabet is formed from phonemes, while ASCIIbetical is a componym formed from MICUs).

Because it builds connections on familiar grounds, the coinage acquires a legitimacy which, in time, becomes equal to that of ordinary lexical units as the examples of laser, bit and radar, or as the newly admitted items like dinky or nimby show. (It should be pointed out that while both dinky and nimby are integrated into the electronic version of the COED, only dinky was added to the OED electronic version in 1993 leaving nimby in the lexical fringe. The point to be raised is that when this actually takes place, the etymology of the item gets lost with the passage of time and the alien coinage becomes so familiar that it is naturalised in the language as well as a transplanted organ becomes 'natural' in the receiver's body when a surgical operation is successfully conducted.

In fact, this innovative way of using language, significantly augments the generative capacity of language which makes an

infinite use of finite means by optimising the potential of the finite means. It also reminds us of the distinction drawn by Chomsky's deep and surface structures[17], where a sentence may have one surface structure but two or more different deep structures, with the notable difference that our concern is strictly limited to lexical structures while Chomsky's involved the examination of full syntactic structures and language universals.

Actually, though the process of turning acronyms to componyms remains at fledgling level, it has already started exerting a visible influence on the type of lexis used by cyber -English as can be attested by the ever-increasing number of neologies involving MICUs on the Internet. The changes implicated by the appearance of componyms could become more significant in time, for although they are still considered as marginal today, componyms might well initiate profound transformations in the way people think and communicate in the long run. Most probably, when people become used to this way of coding and decoding language, cyber English will sound like Pidgins sounded once, before turning to Creoles after people used them 'naturally' as their mother tongues. After all, a brief examination of the history of human life shows that it has been characterised by constant growth and complexity in all fields, and human language as we have seen is no exception. An innovation or a new invention appears, struggles to take root, gets further 'internalised' in human habit and then ceases to look new. Later, as we get intimately acquainted with it, it loses its newness and looks as if it had always been 'there'. Sometimes, it lingers on and 'naturally' dwells in its location, sometimes it changes its function or appearance, and sometimes it disappears from human memory. So it goes with language. A coinage appears, gains more ground, becomes internalised by a great number of users, and one day, it changes its meaning or simply disappears from human sight and earshot. Accordingly, one might find themselves someday thinking in componyms without ever realising it, just like Mr Jourdain ignored he was making prose.

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Notes and references

1- The Oxford English Dictionary. Second edition 1989. CD. Oxford University Press.
2- See D. Crystal's 1995. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language, p 120.
3- *Les sigles sont la forme extrême de l'abréviation. e.g. MP (Member of Parliament)….Les initiales peuvent se grouper en acronymes. Les lettres ne sont plus lues successivement, l'une après l'autre, mais elles forment un mot. The RAF (Royal Air Force) devient l'acronyme R.A.F. Les acronymes permettent de jouer sur deux sens: celui des mots représentés par des initiales et celui de l'ensemble nouveau. e.g. Le PEN Club rassemble Poets, Essayists, Novelists- gens de plume*. André Crépin. 1994. *Deux Mille Ans de Langue Anglaise*. Nathan, p 157.
4- *La réduction d'une séquence de mots à ses éléments initiaux est un processus qui s'est développé considérablement au cours des cinquante dernières années: cette forte productivité reflète certaines caractéristiques de la société contemporaine, où se multiplient à la fois les découvertes scientifiques et techniques et les institutions et organismes de toute sorte.* Jean Tournier. 1989. *Précis de Lexicologie Anglaise*. Nathan, p 142.
5- See André Martinet. 1998. *Eléments de linguistique général.* Armand Colin.
6 - Idem
7- Steven Johnson 1997. *Interface Culture or How New Technology Transforms the Way we Create and Communicate*. Basic Books, p 111.
8- Daniel Chandler "Semiotics for Beginners", *Modality and Representation*, http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html , (Accessed November, 21, 2009)
9- See Pierre Lévy, 1998. *La Virtualisation du texte*", in Qu'est-ce que le virtuel ? La Découverte.
10- Charles S. Peirce, Collected papers, Pragmatism and Pragmaticism, Vol.5. Electronic version.
11- See Theodore Nelson. 1982. *Literary Machine.* Mindful Pr.
12- Gilles Lipovetsky 2004. *Les Temps Hypermodernes.* Le livre de poche, p 84.
13- See Vannevar Bush. 1945. *As We May Think.* In The Atlantic Monthly.
14- Tim Berners-Lee. 2000. *Weaving the Web.* Texere, p 14.
15- Roy Ascott. *The Architecture Of Cyberception*, http://www.clas.ufl.edu/anthro/Seeker1_s_CyberAnthro_Page.html
16- *Sysope* is a blend formed from System and Operator, and the D.N.S. stands for the Domain Name System.
17- See Noam Chomsky. 2nd Ed. 2002. *Syntactic Structures, Mouton de Gruyter*