

ACRONYMIC PATTERNS IN INDONESIAN¹

SOENJONO DARDJOWIDJOJO

1. INTRODUCTION

If we look at the shaping of a language such as Indonesian, we can readily see that this language arose out of circumstances under which a vehicle of communication was desperately needed among people with different language backgrounds (Alisjahbana, 1957; Dardjowidjojo, 1967; Halim, 1972). Despite the fact that this situation fits fairly well with Hockett's definition of a pidgin (Hockett, 1958, p.422), no one has ever volunteered to label Indonesian as a pidgin language, even when we know that some foreign languages, notably Sanskrit (Gonda, 1952), "helped shape" the language substantially.

When the term *Melayu* was changed into *Bahasa Indonesia* (*Indonesian language*) in 1928 and then adopted as our national language in 1945, Indonesian assumed a function much heavier than it had ever shouldered before. The use of Dutch was soon banned, and the Japanese occupation of the country could not change the fate of the course. Indonesian soon became *the* language to be used among different ethnic groups and in official communications. In academic circles, Indonesian had to progress as fast as the scientific endeavours demanded it to.

While at the moment we cannot say that Indonesian has achieved a standard by which we can measure all and any deviations as being non-Indonesian, we can certainly say that we are in the process of standardising and modernising our national language. In order to cope with the multi-directional demands, Indonesian not only has to borrow new terms for new concepts from other languages - *data*, *sensus*, *fonim*, *bisnis* to cite but a few - but it also has to intensify internal creations.

This paper is to look into one type of internal creation which I have called acronymisation. While I am fully aware that acronymic processes are found in virtually all languages, it seems to have a unique role and significance in the development of Indonesian. It is true that the acronymic phenomena have been in the language for a long time, but they did not become popular and productive until the 60s. In military academies, for instance, cadets are taught these acronyms as part of their courses (Departemen Angkatan Darat, 1968). The increase of military role after the 1965 abortive coup d'etat - and therefore the increase of acronyms found in mass media - only added fuel to the flame. People began to acronymise anything acronymisable and "play" with this new "in-thing". Puns began to appear. Among the Javanese, for instance, the acronym *pentilkecakot* '*telephone inspector for the city sub-district*' was coined from the full Indonesian forms *penilik tilpun kecamatan kota*, despite the fact that there is no such a position existing. It is apparent that this acronym was made merely in fun since the forms *pentil kecakot* do constitute real Javanese words meaning '*nipples unintentionally sucked*'.

While quite a number of these acronyms is found only in written forms, many are used orally as well, especially in cases where they show congruities with the phonotactic rules of the language. Thus, forms such as *pangkopkamtib* '*Commander of the Operation Command of the Restoration of Safety and Order*', which is derived from *panglima komando operasi pemulihan keamanan dan ketertiban*, are very much on the written side of the language, whereas *berdikari* '*to stand on one's own feet*', which is derived from *berdiri di atas kaki sendiri*, is very common both in its oral and written forms.

2. DESCRIPTION

Indonesians do not make a distinction between acronyms and abbreviations. The term *singkatan* '*shortened form*' is used to refer to both.² In this paper I will use the terms acronym and abbreviation interchangeably to represent the sense of *singkatan*.

In terms of familiarity and well-establishedness, we can classify acronyms into two major categories: (i) those acronyms which have been used in the language for a long time, and (ii) those which have been recently coined. Members of the first category are known virtually to every literate Indonesian and they have been used consistently by everyone in the country. Forms such as *kpd*, *tsb*, *a.l.*, *AURI*, *yth*, for instance, are not only known by Indonesians, but each form represents the same full form and the same semantic concept, namely, *kepada* '*to(ward)*',

tersebut '*previously mentioned*', antara lain '*among others*', Angkatan Udara Republik Indonesia '*Air Force of the Republic of Indonesia*', and yang terhormat '*Dear (So and So)*' respectively.

The second category is very interesting to observe, because, while it is productive in its own right, it also bewilders even native speakers living in the country. This paper will be limited only to this second category.

2.1 ACRONYMIC SYLLABLES

Basically there are two ways to coin an acronymic syllable: (i) by observing some kind of syllabification of the words to be abbreviated, and (ii) by taking into account the graphemic representation of these original words.

There are several subtypes which belong to the first type above. Perhaps the most common of all is that the acronymic syllable is derived from the first syllable of the full form. Thus, *or-*, *mu-*, and *bi-* of *orba* '*new order*', *muker* '*work conference*', and *Bima* '*Blue coloured night train*' are derived from the full forms orde, musyawarah, and biru respectively.

A second subtype of an acronymic syllable consists of the last syllable of the full form. The acronymic syllables *-dan*, *-pur*, and *-yon*, for instance, are used to represent the full forms komandan, tempur, and bataliyon to form the acronymic words dandim (komandan distrik militer) '*commandant of the military district*', zipur (zenj, tempur) '*combat troop*', and danyon (komandan bataliyon) '*battalion commandant*', respectively.

The third subtype requires that the original full form ends in a consonant. If the first syllable of the full form has a CV, the acronymic syllable is formed by taking this CV plus the last C of the full form. This brings about the existence of forms such as *dit-*, *dir-* and *ban-* of *ditjen* '*director general*', *dirjen* '*director general*', and *banser* '*multi purpose troop*' where *dit-*, *dir-* and *ban-* are derived from the underlined parts of the full forms direktorat, direktor, and barisan respectively. *Ditjen*, *dirjen*, and *banser* come from direktorat jendral, direktor jendral and barisan serba guna.

Although there are not many examples found, there seems to be a tendency to apply this rule where the first syllable of the full form begins with a vowel. In this case the acronymic syllable is formed by taking the first V and the last C of the full form. Thus, '*inspector*' and '*engineer*' are abbreviated as *ir* as in *Irjen* (Inspektur Jendral) '*Inspector General*' and *Ir. Soekarno* (Insinyur Soekarno) '*Engineer Soekarno*'.

The fourth subtype involves cases where the last letter of the full form is a vowel. If the first letter of the first syllable of the full form is a consonant, the acronymic syllable is coined by juxtaposing the first consonant and the last vowel. Thus, *kepala* 'chief', *dua* 'two', and *tertinggi* 'highest' are respectively abbreviated as *ka* as in *KASAD* (*Kepala Staff Angkatan Darat*) 'Army Chief of Staff', *da* as in *Letda* (*Letnan Dua*) 'Second Lieutenant', and *ti* as in *Koti* (*Komando Operasi Tertinggi*) 'the Highest Operation Commando'.

While we have seen cases where the initial letter(s) of a full form is used to make an acronymic syllable with or without any additional letter(s), we have not seen cases where the last letter of the full form is used to represent the whole full form. I have so far found only one example where the last letter is used to represent the whole. The full form *cepat* 'fast' is abbreviated into *t* as in *Kopasgat* 'Commando of the Fast Moving Troop' which stands for *Komando Pasukan Gerak Cepat*.³

As we have seen from the above examples, virtually all of what Fries called content words (Fries, 1945), which are abbreviated, are represented in the acronyms one way or another. There are cases, however, where a content word is deleted from the acronym. In the case of *Menlu* 'Minister of Foreign Affairs', where *men* = *menteri* 'minister', the use of *lu* to represent *luar* 'outside' and *negeri* 'country' can perhaps be explained on the basis of redundancy. The collocation of *menteri* and *luar* forces people with no choice but to add the word *negeri* obligatorily since *menteri luar* by itself does not occur in the language and that the only possible *menteri luar* is *menteri luar negeri*.

In most cases, however, there does not seem to be any explanation available. The use of *ser* as in *banser* given above to represent the words *serba* 'various' and *guna* 'use' is a case in point. The morpheme *serba* in the context of *banser* can collocate with several other possible words such as *neka* 'type', *lengkap* 'complete' etc. and would still produce meaningful acronyms.

Still in some cases, not only is the deleted word a content word, but that that content word happens to be very crucial. Thus the acronym *konjerman* 'Commando of the Mine Sweepers' lacks the acronymic form for *penyapu* 'sweepers' because *konjerman* is supposed to represent *komando jenis penyapu ranjau*.

The role of the root whose derived form becomes the source of an acronymic syllable also seems important. We have cases where the acronymic syllable is not derived from the full form per se but from the root underlying the full form. The word for money, *uang*, for instance, is often abbreviated as *u* irrespective of the actual full derivative form. Thus the Academy of Finance and Banking is abbreviated as *Akubang*

where ak = akademi, u = keuangan, and bang = bang. And Ekubang '*Economics, Finance, and Development*' comes from Ekonomi, Keuangan, dan Pembangunan.

All of the acronyms given above are based on segmental features. There are cases where the determining factor seems to be the location of the stress, which normally falls on the penultimate syllable. The daily word pertahanan '*defence*' is abbreviated into han as in hankam (pertahanan dan keamanan) '*defence and security*', hansip (pertahanan sipil) '*civil defence*' and hanra (pertahanan rakyat) '*people's defence*'.

Virtually all of the examples that we have had so far look and/or sound real Indonesian words, that is, they fit very nicely with the word structure of the language. The graphemically oriented acronymic syllables seem to be based on the wish - unconscious as it may be - on the part of the inventor to give people some hint so that they could probably guess what the acronym may have been derived from. Some of these acronyms still conform to the phonotactic rules of the language. Thus for '*General Election*' and '*(Some kind of) Prime Minister*' people use pemilu (pemilihan umum) and Menutama (Menteri Utama) instead of any other possible acronyms such as *pemu and *Menut - the latter two conforming fully also to the Indonesian phonotactic rules.

In our attempt to give people hints, we occasionally run into problems. Some of the acronyms come in conflict with the well-established norms. The coining of brig for brigadir in brigjen (brigadir jendral) '*brigadier general*', may for mayor in mayjen (mayor jendral) '*major general*', bant for bantuan in kojenbant (komando jenis bantuan) '*supporting commands*' must have been based on the wish of the inventor to "help" people out. In our attempt to give people hints, we coined the acronyms brigjen, mayjen, and konjenbant, but these forms violate Indonesian phonotactics - the juxtaposition of gj, yj, and nt as a final consonant cluster is not phonotactically justified.

From the foregoing analysis we can see that while the acronymic phenomena in Indonesian are rather hectic, there are "guidelines" - however inconsistent they may be as we will see later on - which people say they follow. However, there are a few cases where the acronymisation does not follow any of the patterns we have established so far. An example of this "deviation" is the acronym jubir '*spokesman*', which is derived from juru '*expert*' and bicara '*speak*'. While the ju of juru follows the regular acronymic rule, the bir of bicara is unique in that it takes the first CV bi and a consonant, r, from somewhere among the rest of the elements in the original word.

The same phenomenon also occurs in the previously cited Kopasgat. While the ko and the pas (plus the t of gat as discussed before) are

normal, the use of *ga* to represent *gerak* 'move' is unique.

A similar situation is also found in the use of *kam* to represent *keamanan* 'safety'. Here the first C is taken and then followed by the first syllable of the root *aman* - which is *a* - and closed with the first consonant of the second syllable of the root - which is *m*.

Finally, there is a unique case where each acronymic element represents a rather complex concept. Graphically, the element represents a phrase or a sentence. The acronym *USDEK*, for instance, represents

U = Undang2 Dasar 1945	'the 1945 Constitution'
S = Socialisme Indonesia	'Indonesian Socialism'
D = Demokrasi Terpimpin	'Guided Democracy'
E = Ekonomi Terpimpin	'Guided Economy'
K = Kepribadian Indonesia	'Indonesian Identity'

2.2 ACROTACTIC

The term *acrotactic* is used here to refer to the ways in which acronymic syllables are combined to form acronymic words. Since the degree of acceptability of an acronymic word is related to the similarity or dissimilarity between it and the Indonesian word structure, it is necessary to sketch very briefly some aspects of the word structure of Indonesian relevant to our present discussion.

Basically Indonesian has a relatively simple syllable structure:

(i) CV, (ii) CVC, (iii) VC, and (iv) V. Early and recent contacts with other non-Indonesian languages have made the language acquire other syllable structures such as CCV, CCVC, CCCV, and CCCVC. We notice here that no consonant clusters occur at the end of a syllable. No voiced stops,⁴ voiced or voiceless affricates occur in syllable final positions. And finally, there are not many cases where two vowels, especially if they are the same vowels, occur one after the other.

There are several generalisations which we can make regarding the shapes of the acronymic words. First, the relatively simple but inherent canonical forms of Indonesian definitely exert a structural pressure on the shapes of the acronymic words. The bulk of the acronyms in Indonesian today results from the combination of two of these: CV, CVC, VC and V. Some examples,

CV + CVC	: muker from musyawarah kerja 'work conference'
	dubes from duta besar 'ambassador = great envoy'
	caper from calon perwira 'candidate for officer'

- CV + CV : koti from komando operasi tertinggi '*highest operation commando*'
 Bima from Biru Malam '*Blue coloured Night Train*'
 pati from perwira tinggi '*high ranking officer*'
- CVC + CVC : parpol from partai politik '*political party*'
 Golkar from Golongan Karya '*technocrat group*'
 cerpen from cerita pendek '*short story*'
- CVC + CV : turba from turun ke bawah '*fact finding*'
 hanra from pertahanan rakya '*people's defence*'
 letda from letnan dua '*second lieutenant*'
- VC + CVC : ormas from organisasi massa '*mass organisation*'
 orpol from organisasi politik '*political organisation*'
 atmil from atase militer '*military attaché*', etc.

It is obvious that the most important factor in coining an acronym is what the end result will sound or look like and not what particular element or elements from the original full forms should be taken. Thus forms such as muker, caper, Golkar not only follow the Indonesian phonotactic rules, but that each of the acronymic syllables happens also to be a real Indonesian syllable. However, this is not true for dubes and cerpen where the original words besar and cerita, which are normally cut into be-sar and ce-ri-ta, are abbreviated as bes and cer respectively, thus leaving at less than a syllable and ta one and a half syllables.

Another example which is rather extreme is the acronymic word kostrad '*Commando of Strategy of the Army*'. While ko, a, and d are normal, representing komando, angkatan, and darat respectively, the str is just a mere string of letters, unpronounceable and foreign. And yet kostrad is a very well-known and well-used word, orally as well as in written form.

The second generalisation involves the juxtaposition of two vowels. The fact that two same vowels very rarely occur consecutively compels the language users to avoid as much as possible an acronym with a V_1 and V_1 . Thus for Atase Angkatan Laut '*Naval Attaché*', and Akademi Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia '*Academy of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia*' people use Atal and Akabri where the t and the k may have been used as separators of the two as.

If the two vowels are dissimilar, the above rule may not be followed. Thus acronyms such as Koarsa (Komando Armada Siaga) '*Active Fleet Commando*', Aip (Ajun Inspektur Polisi) '*Adjunct Police Officer*', Koanda (Komando Antar Daerah) '*Inter-regional Commando*' are found.

Another generalisation that we can make pertains to the number of syllables in the acronyms. Just as is the case with the Indonesian words, the bulk of the acronymic words in Indonesian also has either two or three syllables. A one syllable acronym is extremely rare. Acronyms with more than three syllables are also found occasionally, and they usually follow the basic syllable structure of the language. So we have acronyms such as kojarsena (korps pelajar serba guna) '*Students' Multipurpose Corps*', Menabungka (Menara Bung Karno) '*Bung Karno's monument*', sendratari (seni drama dan tari) '*Indonesian ballet*', etc.

In some cases the acronyms are not only long but they also deviate very much from the normal Indonesian word structure. The acronym pangkopkamtib which we gave earlier, in addition to having four syllables, also looks and sounds as if it were a foreign form which can be cut into four words pang, kop, kam, and tib. The acronym lfaipolekrochsosbud reported by De Vries (De Vries, p.341) must be not only the longest acronym but also one of the most "un-Indonesian".

2.3 THE SYLLABLE STRUCTURE OF THE ACRONYMS

We can summarise the syllable structure of the acronyms as follows:

(see chart on following page)

- Patterns
- I. Syllable-based
 - a. Segmental
 - 1. First Syllable of Original Form: muker, orba, orla
 - 2. Last Syllable of Original Form: dandim, zipur
 - 3. First CV + final C: ditjen, banser
 - 4. Initial C + last V: kasad, letda
 - 5. Final C representing the whole original word: kopasgat
 - 6. Deletion of Content Word: menlu banser konjeran
 - 7. Root: Akubang, Ekubang
 - b. Supra-segmental: 8. Stressed syllable: hankam, hansip, hanra
 - II. Grapheme-based
 - 1. Phonotactic-conforming: pemilu, menutama
 - 2. Non-phonotactic - conforming: brigjen, mayjen, kojenbant
 - III. Unique
 - 1. Simple Concepts: jubir, kopasgat, hankam
 - 2. Complex Concepts: USDEK

3. DEGREE OF ACCEPTABILITY

Irrespective of the actual shapes of the acronyms, be they normal or deviant, Indonesians tend to at least tolerate their influx. Mass media, in particular the newspapers, take advantage of this situation since it gives them practicality as well as brevity.

How acceptable an acronym is seems to be determined by the nature of the acronym itself. If the acronym deviates very much from the normal Indonesian form, people tend to reject it on the oral aspect but tolerate it in written form.

If the acronym "sounds nice to the ears" people tend to treat it as if it were a real non-acronymic Indonesian word. The acronyms pemilu, repelita (rencana pembangunan lima tahun) 'five year development plan', Golkar and many others have been used regularly in speech.

The willingness of the people to treat these acronyms as real words brings about a rather interesting syntactic phenomenon. Semantic aspects permitting, many of these acronyms are subjected to normal syntactic rules of the language. The acronym berdikari cited earlier is now used as a verb as in

- (1) Indonesia harus bisa berdikari. *'Indonesia must be able to stand on her own feet.'*

Some of the acronyms are subjected to morphological processes. At the time when former Foreign Minister Soebandrio was about to be tried, slogans such as

- (2) Soebandrio harus dimahmilubkan. *'Soebandrio must be court-martialed.'*

were seen, where the acronym mahmilub (Mahkamah militer luar biasa) 'special military court' was used as a verb base and affixed with di- and -kan.

A chairman of an organisation who feels that his organisation is being infiltrated by the communists can say

- (3) Organisasi kami digerpol oleh orang komunis. *'Our organisation is politically sabotaged by the communists.'*

where gerpol (gerilya politik) 'political guerilla' is used as a verb with the passive prefix di- and a slightly different meaning from the original.

For space-saving purposes newspapers use acronyms that sometimes lead to the point of incomprehensibility. Unless one keeps abreast with the continuous acronymic processes, he - even a native speaker - will find that he can read, but does not necessarily understand what he is reading. Sentences (4) and (5) below are taken from newspapers, but (6) and (7) are my own creations.

- (4) Pangdak VII/Jaya Irjen Pol. Drs. Soekahar sekali lagi menegaskan bahwa Komdak VII/Jaya tidak akan segan2 untuk ... (from *Merdeka*, June 16, 1970).
- (5) Dalam rangka penyelesaian tapol G.30.S/PKI di daerah Jawa Barat, dalam waktu dekat Laksus Pangkopkamtib Jabar akan segera ... (from *Merdeka*, June 16, 1970).
- (6) Tapol2 G.30.S/PKI golongan Lekra yang sudah dimahmilubkan dan dibebaskan boleh masuk orpol2 atau ormas2 baru untuk ikut pemilu tahun depan.
- (7) KAMI, KAPI, KASI dan Kojarsena harus bisa berdikari dalam pelita, demikian kata Pangdam IV Jateng Mayjen Gombloh Surodirjo.

All the underlined words above are acronyms.

4. DIRECTIONALITY AND PREDICTABILITY

From the foregoing analysis we can see that the directionality and the predictability of the acronymic phenomena, both from the receptive and productive sides, cannot be easily determined, to say the least. It is true that, due to their frequency of occurrence or some kind of regularity, some acronyms can be "deciphered" or coined relatively easily. The frequent usage of forms such as *han*, *dit*, *dir*, and *kam*, for instance, enable people to know what these acronyms stand for in combination with other acronymic forms, despite the fact that they are derived in rather unique ways. Forms such as *bimas*, *tapol*, and *Golkar* are easy to understand because, in addition to their frequent usage, they are formed on the basis of the syllables of the original words.

The fact that some acronymic syllables have been used rather consistently enables also people - with some luck - to coin new acronyms. Thus, if the term for '*political pressure*', which is *tekanan politik*, becomes popular, perhaps the acronym coined would be *tepol*, where *pol* is already "accepted". If for any reason an acronym is needed for *pertahanan kota* '*city defence*', the coined term would probably be either *hanko* or *hankot*.

In most cases, however, the matter is not very simple at all. On the "decipherisation" side, several problems can be readily seen. To begin with, given an acronymic form - be it a word or a syllable - we cannot tell if this form stands for one word or a string of words. Given the forms *dan*, *mil*, *jen* we are told that each stands for *komandan*, *militer*, and *jendral* respectively. But the forms *dim*, *rem*, and *kop*

stand for more than one word each, namely *distrik militer*, *resot militer*, and *komando operasi pemulihan*. The problem increases when these acronyms are combined with other acronyms to form still new acronyms.

As mentioned before, another problem that we have involves the inconsistency of the coining process. It often happens that a single semantic concept is represented by more than one acronymic form. Thus, *militer* is abbreviated into *mil* as in *koramil* (*komando rayon militer*) '*commando of a military sub-subdistrict*', into *m* as in *kodam* (*komando daerah militer*) '*commando of a military region*', and into *mi* as in *mahmilub* (*mahkamah militer luar biasa*) '*special military court*'.

We have also noticed earlier that *serba guna* '*multi purpose*' was abbreviated into *ser* in *banser* and *sena* in *kojarsena*. Another example is the acronym for *komando*. While in virtually all cases it is abbreviated as *ko*, it becomes *kon* in *konjeran* - perhaps for homorganic reasons.

The reverse of the above situation is also true, that is, two or more different semantic concepts being represented by one and the same acronymic form. We recall that *ti* of *koti* '*highest command of operation*' stands for the full form *tertinggi*, but *ti* is also used for *tingkat* as in *Daswati I* (*Daerah Swatantra Tingkat I*) '*Autonomous Region Level I*'. The form *rem* mentioned earlier stands for *resot militer*, but this same acronym is also used for *resimen* '*regiment*'.

The active coining aspect of the acronyms is also problematic. I may have given the impression that the patterns for acronyms sketched above are definitive rules. In a way they are. But the problem is that we do not know exactly what or which particular words or phrases are to be subjected to which rule(s). We recall, for instance, that there is a pattern which says that an acronymic syllable can be formed by having the first CV plus the C which closes the original word. Thus *direktur*, *direktorat*, and *barisan* are abbreviated into *dir*, *dit*, and *ban* respectively. This rule, however, is not followed all the way. The acronym for *komandan*, for instance, could have been **kon*, instead of *dan*, and **kondim* sounds as homorganic as the accepted *dandim* (*komandan distrik militer*) '*commandant of the military district*'.

5. COGNITIVE REASONING

There is no doubt that the reason why people acronymise forms is well rooted in their instinctive desire to follow what Zipf has called "principle of least effort" (Zipf, 1949). While this principle is not a basic requirement for human survival, it is definitely a universal path that every human being chooses when faced with a problem to solve. Acronymisation is only a very minor sample of this human instinct. It is found in any language of wider communication.

The question that interests us, then, is not why people acronymise, but rather why they acronymise the way they do? I believe there is a possible answer for this question, although I must admit that it only answers partially.

As we have seen in Section 2.2 the creation of acronyms seems to be based almost exclusively on the norms which inherently exist in the language and, therefore, shared by members of the speech community. We must hold this responsible for the fact that the bulk of the acronymic word structure and the number of syllables in the acronym conform very much to the Indonesian counterparts. This is also the factor which makes native speakers say "sounds nice to the ears" when asked why a particular word is acronymised in a particular way. Acronyms such as *bimas* (*bimbingan massa*) '*mass guidance*', *turba*, *pemilu*, *menutama* etc. must have been based on this principle.

In some cases the acronyms are coined in such a way that they also constitute real Indonesian words - of course, with different meanings. The choice of *pelita* (*pembangunan lima tahun*) '*five year development*', *Jaya* (*Jakarta Raya*) '*Greater Jakarta*', *KAMI* (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia*) '*Indonesian Students' Association*', must have been based on the fact that *pelita*, *jaya*, and *kami* are indeed also Indonesian words meaning '*light*', '*victorious*', and '*we*' respectively.

Still in some other cases the shape of the acronym may have been dictated not only by the existence of real Indonesian words but also by the cultural values prevalent within the society. The luxurious blue coloured train that runs at night from Jakarta to Surabaya, *Biru Malam*, could have been called **Bilam*, **Rulam*, or **Ruma*, all of which follow the phonotactic rules of the language. Yet the official name is *Bima* '(literally) *Blue at Night*', because, I presume, this word happens to be the name of the most physically powerful hero in the Javanese version of the *Mahabhārata*.

When former President Soekarno was transferring most of his power to General Soeharto on March 11, 1966, to restore peace and order after the abortive coup d'état, the letter of authority was referred to as *Super Semar*. The first word, *Super*, which is derived from *surat perintah* '*letter of order*', is obviously inspired by the English word *super* which also carries a powerful connotation in Indonesian. The second word, *Semar*, which is derived from *sebelas Maret* '*March 11*', is an Indonesian word, used mostly by Javanese, and refers to a godly character from the Javanese *Mahabhārata* who is to live on earth to make sure that things are run properly by human beings as well as gods. The acronym *Super Semar*, therefore, carries the spirit very well.

We know that what non-linguist native speakers call "nice to the ears" is in fact a very basic linguistic principle which has recently been referred to as competence. It is this competence which enables the Indonesian people to generate nice sounding/looking acronyms.

While "nice to the ears" is certainly a solid ground for acronymisation, we have seen inconsistencies where a full form is abbreviated into several different acronyms: *militer* into *mil*, *m*, and *mi* as in *koramil*, *kodam* and *mahmilub* respectively. While the choice of *mi* instead of *mil* in *mahmilub* may have been influenced by the otherwise presence of double *l*, which is not totally foreign but extremely rare, there is no reason why *militer* in *koramil* and *kodam* should take two different forms, especially when these terms were invented by the same source - the military office in Jakarta. The acronyms could have been *koram* (after all we have also the acronym *korem*!) and *kodam*, or *koramil* and *kodamil* - all of which follow the phonotactic rules of the language, and are as nice to the ears as the existing acronyms.

One thing which is rather disturbing is that if competence is a unique and inherent property of human beings, there should not be many cases where acronymic forms deviate, in some cases very much, from what is inherent in the language. I am not saying that language is, or should be, fully logical. I am saying that language is systematic and that trends of development revolve around the network within the system. The three cognitive reasons I have just mentioned are well within this network.

There is a substantial number of acronyms, however, which I would venture to say "lie outside the network". The previously mentioned cases such as *pangkopkamtib*, *konjenbant*, and *lfpolekrochsosbud* and other forms such as *ditaj* (*direktorat ajudan jendral*) '*Directorate of the Adjutant General*', *urhibjah* (*urusan hiburan dan kesejahteraan*) '*Section on Entertainment and Welfare*', *depdag* (*departemen perdagangan*) obviously do not sound nice to the Indonesian ears. Since this is the case, is it possible that native speakers in this particular instance are what Chomsky calls "not aware of their internalized grammar" (Chomsky, 1970, p.194), or, in fact are they following what Humboldt accurately expressed 138 years ago, that is, "no matter how innate language is in its entirety, it still possesses at the same time an independent external existence, exerting a power against man himself" (p.6)?

Since native speakers by definition possess a linguistic competence, and yet in our present case they create surface forms which are not traceable to their internalised grammar, it is clear that Humboldt's "independent external existence" must be a factor, if not *the* factor,

that can explain why people generate deviant acronyms. As linguists we should be concerned with this phenomenon, because if this is to continue - which seems to be the case in Indonesia - we are in fact witnessing a language development from two opposing polarisations. I am not saying that this is unfortunate, but I am saying that it is extremely unique, to say the least, and that the long range ramifications, especially in the phonological structure, should be watched very closely.

NOTES

1. This is a slightly revised version of my paper "Acronymization as an Alternative for Linguistic Borrowing: A Case in Indonesian", read in absentia at the Third Annual Meeting of the American Council of Teachers of Uncommonly-Taught Asian Languages, Denver, Colorado, November, 1974.
2. Anton M. Moeliono uses the term *kata pancung* to refer to acronyms.
3. The old spelling of *cepat* is *tjepat*. So the *t* of *kopasgat* could have been derived from the first two letters, *tj*, which constitute a single phoneme, rather than from the last letter *t* as assumed here. It is, however, unlikely, because the abbreviation would have now been changed into *kopasgac*, if this had been the case.
4. Very few words do end in *b*, *d*, or *g*, but they are pronounced by most speakers as voiceless stops.

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