

# Acronyms and neighbouring categories in the language of photography

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## Abstract

This article focuses on acronyms and related items, namely abbreviations, alphabetisms, blends, and clippings in the language of photography, a field that has not been previously examined. Numerous studies have dealt with these word-formation processes in the general language and, although to a lesser extent, in the different specialized languages. To date, despite the ubiquitous presence of photography in the modern world, no research has addressed the use of these categories in the language of photography, as one of the many fields of ESP. This paper intends to fill this gap and to identify, analyse and classify acronyms, alphabetisms, abbreviations, blends, and clippings in photography discourse focusing on their structure and characteristics. To meet this objective, a corpus-based approach was followed. The data were gathered from professional photography blogs providing authentic up-to-date lexis. The results suggest that these categories abound in the language of photography. Although to differing extents, there are acronyms (e.g., *lomo*, *gobo*), alphabetisms (e.g., *DSLR*, *HDR*), abbreviations (e.g., *Mpx*, *mm*), blends (*squinch*, *bit*), and clippings (e.g., *photog*, *cam*), in addition to peripheral cases (e.g., *Be&W*, *RAW*, *L\*a\*b\**) and hybrid categories (e.g., *PNG*, *Jpeg*).

**Keywords:** acronyms, abbreviations, blends, clippings, photography.

## Resumen

### *Acónimos y categorías vecinas en el lenguaje de la fotografía*

Este artículo se centra en los acónimos y en categorías vecinas, en concreto, las abreviaturas, alfabetismos, cruces léxicos y acortamientos en el lenguaje de la fotografía, un campo que todavía no ha sido examinado. Numerosos estudios han tratado estos procesos de formación de palabras en el lenguaje general y, en menor medida, en los distintos lenguajes especializados. Hasta el momento, a

pesar de la omnipresencia de la fotografía en el mundo moderno, ninguna investigación ha abordado el uso de estas categorías en el lenguaje de la fotografía, entendido como uno de los numerosos campos de Inglés para Fines Específicos. Este artículo pretende cubrir esta laguna e identificar, analizar y clasificar los acrónimos, alfabéticos, abreviaturas, cruces léxicos y acortamientos en el discurso de la fotografía, con especial atención a su estructura y características. Para cumplir con este objetivo se siguió un enfoque basado en corpus. Los datos se recopilieron de blogs de fotografía profesionales que muestran un léxico auténtico y actualizado. Los resultados sugieren que estas categorías abundan en el lenguaje de la fotografía. Aunque en diferente medida, existen acrónimos (p. ej., *lomo, gobo*), alfabéticos (p. ej., *DSLR, HDR*), abreviaturas (p. ej., *Mpx, mm*), cruces léxicos (*squinch, bit*) y acortamientos (p. ej., *photog, cam*), además de algunos casos periféricos (p. ej., *BeW, RAW, L\*a\*b\**) y categorías híbridas (p. ej., *PNG, Jpeg*).

**Palabras clave:** acrónimos, abreviaturas, cruces léxicos, acortamientos, fotografía.

## 1. Introduction

The study of word-formation processes is not new and researchers have long been interested in this topic (see e.g. Adams, 1973, 2013; Bauer, 1983; Bloomfield, 1935 [1933]; Jespersen, 1942; Marchand, 1969; Plag, 2018). As Algeo (2010) remarks, “most new words come in one way or another from older words”, for example by compounding, derivation, conversion, or other word-formation devices, and creating a word out of nothing is a very rare phenomenon (p. 224). Thus, except for a few cases (e.g. *Kodak*) that were arbitrary combinations of letters, the majority of new words are made from other existing words.

Although there is no single theory of word making, as pointed out by Bauer (1983, p. 1), it appears that some word-formation processes have received more attention than others. If compounding and derivation are treated with special interest from linguists (see, e.g., Adams, 1973, 2013; Bauer, 1983, 2017; Marchand, 1969; O’Grady et al., 1997), blending, acronymy, or clipping, for example, usually make a brief appearance in books on English word-formation. Labelled as “oddities” (Aronoff, 1976, p. 20), “unpredictable formations” (Bauer, 1983, p. 232), “extra-grammatical” formations (Dressler & Barbaresi, 1994, pp. 36-41; Mattiello, 2013), these phenomena have often been considered of “minor” importance (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Scalise, 1984, p. 98) and, therefore, marginalized.

One of the reasons is the lack of predictable rules in many processes, and lack of agreement among scholars on terminology, definitions, taxonomic arrangements, not to mention their fuzzy boundaries that make many word-formation processes poorly defined. In the case of acronyms, alphabetisms, abbreviations, blends, and clippings the inconsistency is especially apparent. For instance, McArthur et al. (2018) use the term “abbreviation” as an umbrella term for “initialisms” –those composed of initial letters where each letter is pronounced individually (*FBI*)–, “acronyms” –where the letters in the abbreviated form are pronounced using English reading rules (*radar*)–, and “clippings” –words formed by removing one or more syllables (*pro* < *professional*)–. Cannon (1989, p. 99), in contrast, uses “initialism” as a superordinate comprising “acronyms”–items “created from the first letter (and infrequently the second or even third letters) of all or most of the 3-9 constituents of an existing compound [...] pronounced syllabically”– and ‘abbreviations’ –“items created from one or two first letters of all or most of the 1-5 constituents of an existing item [...] pronounced letter by letter” (p. 116)–. To Quirk et al. (1972, p. 832), Cannon’s (1989) abbreviations and McArthur et al.’s (2018) initialisms are “alphabetisms”. Kreidler (1979) regards acronyms and clippings as ‘shortenings’ and blends as ‘multiple clippings’. Blends are also known as ‘portmanteau words’ and there exist as many as twenty-nine synonyms for them (Wentworth, 1933).

For the purpose of this study, I will mainly follow the terminology and typology suggested by López Rúa (2002, 2019) who presents exhaustive research on acronyms and the neighbouring categories and proposes a parameter-based description and classification for each type: acronyms (*laser*), alphabetisms (*BBC*), abbreviations (*Mr.*), clippings (*lab*), and blends (*motel*). I will also take into consideration studies by Beliaeva (2014, 2016) that help to draw a clearer distinction between blends and compound clippings. In addition, taking into account that all have in common the loss of material, I will refer to them all as ‘shortenings’ following Cannon (1989): “we will propose [...] the common term shortening as the name of the division that produces blends, acronyms, abbreviations, and other reduced items” (p. 107).

Despite a great deal of variation concerning terminology or typology and other discrepancies, these formations are so common in the English language (Bauer, 1983, p. 232) that they deserve more attention. Researchers agree that shortenings, in general, have become increasingly productive throughout the second half of the 20th century and they continue proliferating in the 21<sup>st</sup> (Ayto, 1999, p. ix; Kostina et al., 2015, p. 706;

Mattiello, 2013, p. 2) especially in fields related to technology, for example, computer-mediated communication contexts (McArthur et al., 2018).

In recent decades, numerous studies appear to pay more attention to acronyms and the neighbouring categories not only in the general language (Gries, 2004a, 2004b; Harley, 2004; López Rúa, 2002; Mattiello, 2013; Silaški, & Đurović, 2013) but also in specialized languages. For example, there are studies in medicine (e.g. Kuhn, 2007), business and finances (Mirabela & Ariana, 2009, 2014), and computer science and technology (e.g. Tavaglione, 2020; Vlietstra, 2001), just to mention a few.

Yet, not all ESP discourses have received the same degree of attention and the discourse of photography is one such case where little work has been done so far. Despite the vast amount of literature on photography from different perspectives –historical (Newhall, 1984; Rosenblum, 1997), anthropological (Sontag, 1977), artistic (Bourdieu & Whiteside, 1996; DuChemin, 2012; Scharf, 1990) and technical (Evening, 2015; Kelby, 2018)–, research into the language of photography in English is limited. There are a few studies of metaphors in photography in English (Assfalg et al., 1999; Keats, 2010; Mykytka, 2016; Pollen, 2013), of noun compounds (Mykytka, 2020a), of its lexical and semantic features (Mykytka, 2020b; Navab, 2001), and English loanwords in the language of photography in Spanish (Mykytka, 2017). Yet, to my knowledge, no work exists that deals with acronyms or other shortenings in photography discourse. The lack of empirical studies on the lexis of photography indicates that there is a clear need for research in the area. The current study, therefore, aims to partially fill this gap. The main questions addressed are whether the language of photography makes use of acronyms, alphabetisms, abbreviations, blending, and clipping and, if so, which terms are present and to what extent, how they were created, and how they could be classified.

This study will thus benefit both lexicology and photography. The popularity of the latter is growing and its significance should not be overlooked, since it is embedded in our daily lives. If in 1982 Burgin pointed out that it was “*almost* as unusual to pass a day without seeing a photograph as it is to miss seeing writing” (my emphasis) (Burgin, 1982), nowadays it *is* impossible to spend a day without seeing a photograph. The arrival of the Internet and social networks, as well as other forms of communication (e.g. online magazines, blogs, and forums), has enabled the sharing of photographs on a truly massive scale. Photography can be an art, a technique for capturing

moments in our lives, a resource or tool for other disciplines, a profession, or a hobby. It has become an essential part of our society, and its language, without a doubt, also deserves attention.

## 2. Language of photography

To begin with, it should be noted that “photography language” or “the language of photography” commonly refers to the means of expression or communication, i.e., the capacity of photographs to convey messages and ideas (see Burgin, 1982; Chandler & Livingston, 2016; Fairey & Orton, 2019; Scott, 1999, 2020). However, it may also refer to the verbal language used by photographers. The latter is the focus of this paper, which addresses the different types of shortenings of this particular register.

Photography lies at the crossroads between art, science, and technology. It is the result of a centuries-long collaborative effort by artists, scientists, and technological advances. Artists were the forerunners in promoting first the *camera obscura* and then the *camera lucida*, two precursors to the photographic camera. However, when artists used it solely as an aid in the creation of their paintings, scientists went further and dedicated themselves to discovering how to make a *camera* capture images by itself without the intervention of an artist’s hand. After numerous scientific experiments with different photosensitive chemicals and materials, they managed to create permanent prints and to invent photography (see, e.g., Newhall, 1984, for a detailed history of photography). Once invented, thanks to technological advances, it began its remarkable development which continues at present. As a result, art, science, and technology have left their mark on the history and lexis of photography.

The diverse nature of photography entails, on the one hand, the lexis shared among different disciplines, such as painting, computing, chemistry, optics, physics, geometry, astronomy among others, providing photography with an interdisciplinary character (Mykytka, 2020b). On the other hand, the technological facet of photography involves the continuous incorporation of new words, since technology is advancing at a great pace, as is photography.

Photography is now at the centre of continual growth, seeking greater quality, more megapixels, new effects, and new possibilities. As a result, new realities emerge that require naming. For example, the incorporation of a camera in a smartphone (specifically the front-facing camera) has enabled us to take *selfies*. The appearance of Instagram, a popular photo-sharing

application, yielded the word *instagrammer*. The term *reels*, which traditionally referred to “film reels” in photography, acquired new meanings: on Instagram or TikTok reels are short videos. Photoshop, the popular image editing software, gave rise to the verb *to photoshop*. Similarly, the proper noun Plotagraph, a software released recently whose purpose is to create a dynamic image from a still one, seems to be established as a common noun: *plotagraph* (“So having done my first plotagraph earlier, I’ve been playing around some more”; Batty, 2016). Therefore, the lexis of photography is constantly changing and incorporating new terms.

Although there are numerous dictionaries of photography (e.g. Herschdorfer, 2015; Lynch-Johnt & Perkins, 2008), as well as encyclopedias (e.g. Peres, 2013), very few have devoted themselves to researching the language of photography from a linguistic perspective and most writings on this subject are brief and tangential to other research concerns. Apart from the works mentioned in the introduction (Assfalg et al., 1999; Keats, 2010; Mykytka, 2016, 2017, 2020a, 2020b; Navab, 2001; Pollen, 2013) to date no research has addressed the acronyms and other shortenings in the language of photography. The present study, therefore, seeks to address this gap.

### 3. Method

The purpose of this study is to identify the abbreviations, alphabetisms, blends, and clippings used in the language of photography and classify them following a corpus-based methodology. As pointed out by Biber et al. (1998, p. 1) a corpus is the ideal means for examining how language is used in naturally occurring texts rather than exploring what is theoretically possible. The data used in this study were gathered from the Internet. Photography blogs were chosen as the source material from the variety of genres available because they provide authentic usage of language, they are up-to-date, free, and easily accessible. Six blogs were selected for the study, namely *Beyond Megapixels* (BM; Joyce, 2007), *Photofocus* (PF; Harrington, 2008), *Roesch Photography* (RP; Roesch), *Scott Kelby Photoshop Insider* (SK; Kelby, 2007), *Strobist* (ST; Hobby, 2006) and *The Urban Exploration Photography Blog* (UX; Roesch). After the texts were identified, their contents were manually downloaded into text files. Each blog and each post was tagged with its own reference, which is used throughout this article to indicate the source of the items. The tags are formed with the initials of the blog and the date of

publication –year, month, day– of the post on the Internet. For instance, BM\_090710 means that the item was extracted from a post published on the Beyond Megapixels blog on July 10, 2009. I compiled a corpus of about 900,000 words, composed of 1,644 blog posts on photography, written between 2006 and 2017 by professional photographers who are native speakers of American English. Once the corpus was compiled, the photography terms were manually extracted.

Two factors were considered while identifying photography terms: frequency and meaning. In terms of frequency, the corpus-comparison approach proposed by Sutarsyah et al. (1994) and adopted by Mihwa Chung (2003a, 2003b) shows that technical terms are more common in the discipline to which they belong and are rare in general English. Therefore, the *British National Corpus* (BNC) was employed for comparison, as well as the *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff & Rychl, 2003) to determine the frequency of the words. The *Technicality Analysis Model* (TAM) proposed by Ho Ha and Hyland and based on frequency and meaning was also applied (see Mykytka, 2018 for the detailed explanation of procedure). Different tools were used to check specialized meaning, mainly the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2019) and specialized dictionaries on photography, such as the *Illustrated Dictionary of Photography* (Lynch-Johnt & Perkins, 2008) and the *Thames & Hudson Dictionary of Photography* (Hershdorfer, 2015). Other dictionaries were also consulted occasionally.

As a result, 1,144 photography terms were extracted and then the photography acronyms, abbreviations, alphabetisms, blends, and clippings were manually selected and classified mainly following the parameters proposed by López Rúa (2002, 2019), and taking into account studies by Beliaeva (2014, 2016), especially when distinguishing compound clippings from blends.

#### 4. Analysis and results

129 items were identified. The analysis shows that the most common type of shortenings in the language of photography are alphabetisms (67 items; 52%) with clippings in second place (23 items; 18%) and abbreviations in third (17 items; 13%). Other groups were less common: acronyms (7 items; 5%) and blends (5 items; 4%). The final group comprises hybrid items that could not be included in any of the categories since they combine

characteristics from different groups (10 items; 8%). Within each group (except hybrids) the distinction has been made between prototypical, typical, and peripheral items, following the parameters suggested by López Rúa (2002, 2019).

#### 4.1. Acronyms in the language of photography

Although not particularly common (7 items; 5%), acronyms do occur in the language of photography. Two prototypical acronyms were found in this sample:

- (1) *gobo* <goes before optics/'gɔʊ,boʊ/): The *gobo* is on the side of the flash closest to the camera. (ST\_060500)

*lomo* <Rus. Leningradskoye Optiko-Mekhanicheskoye Obyedinenie (Leningrad Optical Mechanical Association) 'loʊ,moʊ/): He started experimenting when he got interested in *lomo* cameras. (BM\_080305)

They both follow all the parameters of prototypical acronyms established by López Rúa (2002, p. 40): (a) syllabic pronunciation, (b) maximal degree of shortening (one or maximum two letters per word), (c) both are used orally and in writing (d) being written in small letters (e) whose source is a phrase. In the case of *lomo*, it is made up exclusively of initial letters of the lexemes, while *gobo* includes an intermediate element “o”, which was probably used to obtain a pronounceable sequence.

Examples in (2), however, are not prototypical acronyms mainly due to their orthography, as they are written in capital letters (more typical of alphabetisms) and not in small letters:

- (2) *EVIL* <Electronic Viewfinder with Interchangeable Lens /'i:vəl/): Sneak peek at Sony's *EVIL* LCD and menus. (PB\_100311)

*GIF* <Graphics Interchange Format /gɪf/): This will convert the file to a *GIF* or PNG. (PF\_150726)

*TIFF* <Tagged Image File Format /tɪf/): I now have three new *TIFF* images at 16 bit. (BM\_090706)

*Exif/EXIF* <Exchangeable Image File Format /'ɛksɪf/): Every photo taken on a digital camera automatically is assigned *EXIF* data. (BM\_091207)



Most of them refer to the different image formats (*GIF*, *TIFF*, *Exif/EXIF*). *EVIL*, in contrast, refers to a type of camera with an electronic viewfinder, that is, the one lacking a mirror, which allows different lenses to be attached. *Exif/EXIF* would be a prototypical acronym if it did not present the two options in writing. Interestingly, the official name of this format is *Exif* but the other version is very commonly used too, probably due to the fact that usually image formats are written in capital letters. Yet, despite the use of capitals, these terms seem to be closer to acronymy than to alphabetisms because of the orthoepic pronunciation, i.e., they are pronounced as words.

(3) *RAW* < raw /rɔː/: Thought Of The Day: *RAW* or JPEG? (RP\_120403)

There is one case of peripheral acronyms, a false acronym *RAW*. It resembles acronyms in the orthoepic pronunciation and the capitals suggest that it comes from a phrase, but in fact it is the common word ‘raw’ referring to an unprocessed or raw image format that contains all of the data as captured by the camera’s sensor. This is one of the numerous image formats, which normally appear in uppercase, and which usually are either acronyms, alphabetisms, or hybrids of both (e. g. *TIFF*, *JPEG*, *PNG*, *GIF*), but speakers often misinterpret the raw format as an acronym and write it in uppercase as in example (3).

## 4.2. Alphabetisms in the language of photography

This is the largest group of shortenings in the photography lexis (52%; 67 items). Similarly, as with acronyms, among the most significant values in alphabetisms, according to López Rúa (2002, p. 41), are their unexpanded pronunciation letter by letter and the maximal degree of shortening (1 initial per lexical word). In addition, they are prototypically written in capital letters whose source form is a phrase. Below there are some examples of prototypical alphabetisms in photography language:

(4) *TTL* < through-the-lens: I still do not trust *TTL* with digital, so I always use manual [...]. (ST\_060700)

*DSLR* < digital single lens reflex: Get your *DSLR* out of auto mode and go manual. (SK\_170818)

*TLR* < twin-lens reflex: I got a Blackbird, Fly which is a 35mm *TLR*. (BM\_090322)

*EFL* < effective focal length: The fixed focal length lens on the X100T

has an effective focal length (*EFL*) of 35mm. (PF\_150221)

*HDR* <high dynamic range: *HDR* photographs can look realistic, or not, [...]. (PF\_170314)

In contrast with the prototypical cases, there are some examples of typical cases that do not conform completely to the characterization of the prototypes: cases where a lexeme is represented by more than one letter, or there are lexemes omitted in the alphabetism. Thus, for example, there are terms such as *DDSSM* (<*Direct Drive Super Sonic Wave Motor*), where not all lexical words are initialized, *DNG* (<*Digital Negative*) where two letters represent the term *negative*, or *XSM* (*Extra Silent Motor*) that include an intermediate component instead of an initial one. Further examples of central or typical alphabetisms are those items whose source form is a word instead of a phrase (5), a group of words (6), or alphabetisms with a written alternative in small letters (7):

(5) *L* < *Luxury*: Canon EF 35mm f/1.4L USM Wide Angle Lens. (BM\_100921)

(6) *RGB* < *Red, Green, Blue*: An *RGB* (Red, Green, Blue) color wheel shows how digital cameras and Photoshop (Lightroom too) create the spectrum of hues in digital photography. (PF\_170313)

*CMYK* < *Cyan Magenta Yellow Key*: They are used for mixing paints and inks for printing on paper in *CMYK* (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key [black]). (PF\_170313)

*HSL* < *Hue, Saturation, Luminosity*: Below it is the version with the *HSL* sliders. (PF\_150702)

(7) *lpi* < *lines per inch*: An increase in *lpi* results in smooth images. (PF\_150722)

*ppi* < *pixels per inch*: [...] and I chose a resolution of 240 *ppi*. (SK\_170619)

Some instances of peripheral alphabetisms are those including numbers (*4K*), slashes (*f/* < *f number*), hyphens (*EF-S* < *Electro Focus Short Back Focus*; *E-TTL* < *Evaluative Through-the-Lens*) or symbols (*L\*a\*b\**). The latter is particularly interesting, as it has various forms: it may be a typical alphabetism (*L~~A~~B*) or it may use the asterisks moving towards peripheral alphabetism.

### 4.3. Abbreviations in the language of photography

The next groups consist of abbreviations (13%; 17 items). Compared to acronyms and alphabetisms, abbreviations have a rather graphic character since they are only used in writing, appearing prototypically in lower case letters or combined with capitals, their degree of shortening is variable (from low to high) and their source can be a word or a phrase (López Rúa, 2002, p. 42). The most significant parameter according to López Rúa (2002, p. 42) is their expanded pronunciation. The photography terms that follow these criteria are the following:

(8) *mm* < millimeters: The Canon EF-s 55-250*mm* F/4-5.6 IS. (BM\_071103)

*fps* < frames per second: Users can choose to record super slow motion video at frame rates of 960*fps*, 480*fps*, and 240*fps*. (PF\_150610)

*px* < pixel: Therefore, a 6399*px* by 4170*px* image can be printed at a maximum size [...]. (PF\_150624)

*mpx* < megapixels: Kodak ZD15 Digital Camera 10*mpx*. (BM\_091123)

Central but not prototypical abbreviations in photography are mainly those written in capitals, such as *BW* (< black and white), *MK* (Mark = version), *FF* (< full frame), *CA* (< Chromatic Aberration), *MF* (< manual focus), *G.W.C* (< guy with camera). Finally, examples of peripheral abbreviations in photography language are those including symbols, in particular, the ampersand: *B&W* (< black and white) and *P&S* (<point and shoot).

### 4.4. Clippings in the language of photography

Clippings are the second most frequent group in this photography corpus (18%; 23 items). This word-formation process has been defined as “the process by which a word of two or more syllables (usually a noun) is shortened without a change in the function taking place” (Adams, 1973, p. 135). Prototypical clippings, according to López Rúa (2002, p. 41), are shortenings of single simple words –usually common nouns or adjectives– written in lower-case letters whose degree of shortening is medium. This process usually affects either the end of the word (back clipping) or the beginning (fore clipping). Probably the most popular examples of prototypical clippings in photography are *pic* (< picture), *photo* (< photograph), and *fav* (< favorite), which are commonly used not only by photographers but also by the general public. Other examples located in this study are the following:

- (9) *cam* < camera: I used to keep my *cam* in a normal shoulder bag [...]. (BM\_090605)

*photog* < photographer: [...] what many different *photogs* [...] do with the exact same assignments. (ST\_060600)

*comp* < composition: This video is an introduction to the app [...] for creating *comps* quickly and easily. (PF\_150418)

*pano* < panorama: Deal with those white gaps left in the corner of *panos* [...]. (SK\_160129)

*tele* < telephoto (lens): Bring out the *tele*, and use the IS [...]. (BM\_090509)

As can be observed, they are all examples of back clipping, preserving the beginning of the lexeme and eliminating the end. Their degree of shortening is medium, and their source is a single word.

Examples of typical clippings are not frequent in the sample. Just one case has been identified: *tog*, which seems to combine fore and back clipping of *photographer*, although it could also be seen as fore-clipping of already shortened *photog*. Its degree of shortening can be described as high, not common in the prototypical clipping, as noted by López Rúa (2002, p. 43).

- (10) *tog* < photographer: This ‘advice’ is almost always aimed at the younger generation of *togs* [...]. (SK\_160420).

From a grammatical and syntactic point of view, clippings are usually nominal and rarely belong to other grammatical categories. This study is in line with this as most of the cases located belong to the nominal category. Yet some exceptions were found too: the verb *pan*, whose origin is not clear as it could come from the noun *panorama* or the adjective *panoramic*, according to OED. Therefore, it seems that clipping does not modify the meaning, although apparently, it can modify the category. This can also be observed in the noun *strobe* which originated from the adjective *stroboscopic*.

- (11) *pan* < panorama/panoramic: The user can zoom and *pan*, straighten photos, crop [...]. (BM\_100610)

*strobe* < stroboscopic: [...] shooting wildlife with *strobes* [...]. (ST\_061200)

It should be noted that this type of word formation is highly unpredictable and, therefore, as Adams (1973, p. 135) points out, there do not seem to be any graphical or phonological norms that allow us to predict how a word

would be shortened. The trend seems to be that the first syllable (*pic* < picture, *post* < post-processing), or the first two (*tele* < telephoto, *photo* < photograph, *pano* < panorama) are usually retained. However, it sometimes does not respect syllabic division, as in *cam* < camera, *pan* < panorama / panoramic, or *comp* < composition.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that clippings also appear in compound words (Adams, 1973, p. 137; Bauer, 1983, p. 233). Thus, authors speak of “clipped compounds” (Bauer et al., 2013), “clipping compounds” (Beliaeva, 2014, 2016; Marchand, 1969, p. 441), or “complex clippings” (Gries, 2004a, 2006; López Rúa, 2019). Currently, there is no unified set of defining criteria for this type of word-formation. Sometimes they are treated as blends (Adams, 1973; Berg, 1998; López Rúa, 2002, 2004, 2019), although many researchers (Bauer, 2012; Beliaeva, 2014, 2016; Cannon, 1986; Gries, 2006) exclude these coinages from the category of blends and classify them as two different word formation types. I will follow the latter approach, in particular Beliaeva (2014, 2016) who proved that “blends and clipping compounds are definitely not the same” (2014, p. 51) as they show different reasons for appearing, they are formed according to different principles, and also they differ in terms of the way they are processed showing different semantic behaviour (2016). In terms of the formula from Plag (2003, p. 123):  $AB + CD = AD$ , where AB is the first source word and CD is the second one, blends are labelled as AD, and clipping compounds as AC forms.

In this sample, there are a few such cases that have been grouped as peripheral clippings. Special attention is warranted by *digicam* and *pixel*, both presenting AC form, although the formation process of the latter is more complex due to graphic modifications and adaptations: *picture* after being shortened to *pic* and pluralized (*pics*) undergoes a graphic adaptation based on the pronunciation, where “cs” becomes “x” (*pix*). Regarding the former, Beliaeva (2014, p. 29) notes that a blend of *digital camera* would be \**digamera* following the pattern AD, and not *digicam*, as is the case.

(12) *pixel* < picture + element: [...] keep your photos sized at 400 (total) *pixels* on the long dimension [...]. (ST\_060500)

*digicam* < digital + camera: What do you do with your old point-and-shoot *digicam* now that you are a DSLR user? (ST\_061200)

Other examples which have been grouped as clipping compounds and included within peripheral clippings are adjectives *full-res* < full resolution

(image), *hi-res* < high resolution (image), *off-cam* < off-camera (flash), *tri-di* < tri-dimensional (pictures), and a proper noun *Leica* < Leitz + camera, which refers to a German company founded by Ernst Leitz in 1914 dedicated to producing prestigious photographic equipment.

#### 4.5. Blends in the language of photography

Despite the unanimity among numerous authors (e.g., Algeo, 1977; Bauer, 1983; Cannon, 1986) that lexical blending is a very popular and productive word-formation mechanism today, in the language of photography it seems rather limited (4%; 5 items). Thus, following the parameters of López Rúa (2019) blends located in this sample have been classified into prototypical and typical; no peripheral cases were encountered.

Prototypical blends are *squinch*, *bit*, *Kodachrome*, and *Instagram*. Following López Rúa (2019) they exhibit unexpanded orthoepic pronunciation and lowercase spelling. Their degree of shortening varies from high to minimum (provided that at least one of the source words is shortened to some extent, and that both source words do not undergo maximum shortening) and their degree of phonic integration is high or medium, often with sound overlaps. From the point of view of orthography, they are written in small letters and they undergo final + initial shortening.

- (13) *squinch* < squint + pinch: My biggest fear was that other photographers would find out about the *squinch*. (PF\_131120)

*bit* < binary digit: [...] you can often choose to work in 16 *bits* per channel in Adobe Photoshop. (PF\_150726)

*Kodachrome* < Kodak + chrome: This photo [...] was taken using *Kodachrome* 64 slide film. (BM\_100914)

*Instagram* < instant + telegram: You can upload the image to Google+ and share to *Instagram* from there. (SK\_160201)

The term *squinch* was coined by the professional portrait photographer Peter Hurley (2017) in 2013 to refer to a technique that consists in “narrowing the distance between the lower eyelid and the pupil”, in other words, to pinch the lower eyelids so the subjects appear more confident. Even though this term is still a neologism, not included in any dictionary, its use is significantly increasing, not only in the English language but it has also been borrowed by other languages, for example, Spanish. *Kodachrome*, however, refers to a photographic film invented in 1935 that ceased production in 2009 (Brandes, 2009).

Only one blend has been categorized as typical: *memcard* (< memory + card). Following López Rúa (2019), typical blends, contrary to prototypical blends, present low phonic integration with clustering, which is the case of *memcard*. It is important to note that it could also be considered as a shortening of an already existing compound word (memory card). Adams (1973, ch. 12) calls these types of words “compound-blends” while Plag (2018, p. 155) considers them as lexical blends of an endocentric type, where the first element modifies the second.

#### 4.6. Hybrids

This group comprises exemplars with fuzzy boundaries (8%; 10 items), which could be analysed within different types of word-formation. As noted by Algeo “although it is easy to recognize some words as ‘pure’ examples of a type of word-formation, there are many others that fall between stools” (1987, p. 123). Thus, in the language of photography, most such cases fall between acronyms and alphabetisms (8 items out of 10), one item combines features of blending and acronymy and another one could be treated as an acronym, alphabetism, or an abbreviation.

##### 4.6.1. Acronyms – alphabetisms

Examples of hybrids in this group are those that allow both pronunciations: the orthoepic pronunciation and letter by letter pronunciation, such as *ISO* (< International Standards Organization), or *ASA* (< American Standard Association) which may be read /aɪsəʊ/ and /'eɪsə/ respectively or may be spelled. Sometimes terms combine both pronunciations as in *JPEG* (< Joint Photographic Experts Group), pronounced as /dʒeɪpɛg/ or *CMOS* (< Complementary metal-oxide semiconductor) known as /sɪmɒs/, in both cases the first element is spelled out while the rest is read. Another interesting example is an acronym that resembles an alphabetism in its form: *PNG* (< *Portable Network Graphics*), an image format known as /pɪŋ/. As can be observed, this sequence has been made pronounceable by adding a vowel /ɪ/ between “P” and “N”.

##### 4.6.2. Acronyms – alphabetisms – abbreviations

This group is represented by *GAS/G.A.S.* (< Gear Acquisition Syndrome) that has two spellings –with or without periods– and three possible readings:

orthoepic, letter by letter, or expanded. It refers to the desire to expand someone's collection of photographic gear: "Don't have G.A.S. (Gear Acquisition Syndrome). It takes your time, attention, money and energy away from what matters most in photography" (UX\_150131).

#### 4.6.3. Blends – acronyms

Just one item is on the borderline between blending and acronymy: the proper noun *Nikon* (< Nippon + Kogaku + Ikon), a Japanese company, currently among the leaders of the photographic sector, founded in 1917 under the name of "Nippon Kogaku" (meaning "Japanese Optics"), which in 1946 became known as Nikon, merging its name with the word "Ikon" as in Zeiss Ikon camera (CamSolo, 2011). It exhibits high phonic integration and maximal degree of shortening which brings it closer to acronyms. On the other hand, the overlap of shared phonological segments and the joining of the initial elements with the final allows a connection to blends.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The results show that the most frequent type of shortenings in photography lexis are alphabetisms (67 items; 52%), while the least frequent are blends (5 items; 4%). The high frequency of alphabetisms could be motivated by the close connection of photography to technology, as explained in section 2. The latter seems to be particularly fond of alphabetisms, together with abbreviations and acronyms, considering the number of publications that exist, in particular dictionaries and glossaries: for example, Tavaglione (2020) collected 7,000 items and Vlietstra (2001) over 33,000.

Alphabetisms, acronyms, and abbreviations, seem to be especially popular in the names of cameras and lenses, which are closely related to technological advances. To illustrate this idea let us have a closer look at the following camera: *Canon EOS 6D Mk II*, where *EOS* (< Electro-Optical-System) may be either an acronym or an alphabetism depending on its pronunciation, *D* (< Digital) is an alphabetism, and *Mk* (< Mark) is an abbreviation. Another example could be the lens *Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS USM*, in which *EF* (< Electro-Focus), *f/* (< focal number), *IS* (< Image Stabilizer), and *USM* (< Ultrasonic Motor) are alphabetisms, while *mm* (< millimeters) and *L* (< Luxury) are abbreviations. Thus *EOS*, *D*, *EF*, *IS*, *USM*, *f/* are all technological concepts describing different features of the beforementioned products.



The speed at which the updated versions of cameras and lenses are launched is astonishing and so is the appearance of new concepts and features that need to be named. Let us take for example Canon: in 2012 it launched its first mirrorless interchangeable-lens camera (*MILC*) *Canon EOS M*, where *M* stands for “mirrorless”. The novelty of this camera consisted in eliminating the reflex mirror present in digital single-lens reflex (*DSLR*) cameras. Since then, 18 new versions of cameras with this system appeared, the most recent being the *Canon EOS R7* and the *Canon EOS R10* announced in May 2022, where “R” comes from “Reimagine optical excellence” (go to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Canon\\_EOS\\_digital\\_cameras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Canon_EOS_digital_cameras) to see the Canon EOS digital camera’s timeline). Each of these 18 versions introduced new features, for instance, the Dual Pixel CMOS autofocus system, the DIGIC 8 image processor, the 15fps continuous mechanical shutter, etc. These and many other examples mentioned in this study are instances of technology-related concepts in photography which go in lockstep with the technological advances.

On the other hand, the reason why blends are so few in the photography language is probably that their motivation is different from alphabetisms; they are often created with humorous or artistic purposes. For example, Lopez Rúa (2019, p.198) studied the motivation behind blends in the field of videogame titles and found that the reasons for blend creation in this field were essentially pragmatic, ludic, anticipatory, group-binding, and artistic. The language of photography has no need to attract potential clients or to be anticipatory for them, nor does it need to be ludic or creative. This jargon is mainly used among photographers and its principal purpose seems to be the economy of time and group-binding.

It should be also noted that shortenings are not created out of nothing but they are formed from other already existing words. The language of photography seems to be especially fond of gradually shortening its terms. For instance, some of the items were created as compounds and gradually ended as abbreviations: *automatic focus* > *auto-focus* > *AF* or *automatic white balance* > *auto-white-balance* > *AWB*). *Pixel* originated as a blend and ended as an abbreviation *px* or even *p*, as in *MP* (< Megapixel). Hence, it seems that the language of photography tends to shorten words, a tendency present in the current society, which aims at retrenching time in any possible way. In this regard, Marchand (1969, p. 447) explains that shortenings originate within specific groups of speakers “in the intimacy of a milieu where a hint is sufficient to indicate the whole”.

To conclude, this study has shed light on the shortenings used in the language of photography, a field that had not previously been researched. The research questions posed at the start of this article have been answered. Firstly, it has been shown that the lexis of photography does make use of shortenings, found in 11.4% of photography terms in the selected corpus. Secondly, a variety of shortenings in this particular corpus has been identified, and they have been classified and explained in detail. Specifically, acronyms (5%), alphabetisms (52%), abbreviations (13%), blends (4%) and clipping (18%) have been identified. Cases whose dividing line was not clear have been gathered under the title of “hybrids” (8%).

The results are based on a limited sample that may not fully capture the variety of shortening in the language of photography. This could be remedied by analysing larger corpora and by considering genres other than blogs, such as photography magazines, forums, or manuals. Researchers are encouraged to continue studying the lexis of photography, which still has much to offer.

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