

LEGE ARTIS

Language yesterday, today, tomorrow

Vol. V. No 2 2020

POREIONYMIC BACKRONYMS: AMBIT, FORMATION, AND DIVERSITY¹

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Bibliographic description: Borys, D. & Materynska, O. (2020). Poreionymic backronyms: Ambit, formation, and diversity. In *Lege artis. Language yesterday, today, tomorrow. The journal of University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava*. Trnava: University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, 2020, V (2), December 2020, p. 2-52. ISSN 2453-8035

Abstract: The present paper examines the nature, formation patterns, types, and correlations of *poreionymic backronyms*, i.e. phrases serving as alternative interpretations of acronyms and non-acronyms designating transport brands, namely cars, both on theoretical and empirical planes. Since backronyms are likely to be confused with other linguistic phenomena, such as acrostics, apronyms, disabbreviations, and recursive acronyms, the differences between these notions are also analysed in the article.

Key words: backronym, poreionym (transport brand name), acronym, non-acronym, acrostic, apronym, disabbreviation, recursive acronym, language game.

1. Introduction

The postmodernism era is often said to be "marked by a shift from truth to fiction and narrative, by a change from the world of experience to that of language, and by the

¹ This publication is also part of a sociolinguistic diversity investigation within Project № 2020.02/0241 (Ecolinguistic Modes of Ukrainian Discursive Space in the European Multicultural Continuum) supported by the National Research Foundation of Ukraine as "Leading and young scientists research support".

demise of the three great metanarratives of science, religion and politics with their replacement by local language-games" (Lecercle 1990: 76). Indeed, language games are by no means the exclusive invention of the 20th century. However, their unprecedented actuation and diversification throughout the past century and, even more conspicuously, nowadays point to an increasing role of satirization as a tool of debunking the stance of the formerly all-pervasive moralistic judgment as well as a response to the now not uncommon double standards penetrating virtually all areas of our life. The modern era may be regarded as a multidimensional "intermarriage" between *Homo Communicens*, *Homo Artifex*, *Homo Ludens*, and *Homo Ridens* (Samokhina & Pasynok 2017: 284). The resulting paradigm shift is linguistically reflected in various forms of wordplay: acronyms, acrostics, anagrams, eggcorns, homonymy, lipograms, malapropisms, neologisms, palindromes, pangrams, parody, polysemy, portmanteau words, rhymes, sesquipedalian words, spoonerisms, tautonyms (Žyško 2017: 19-23), fantasy words (Danilchuk 2018), Internet memes (Martynyuk & Meleshchenko 2019: 132-133), etc. The highlight of the present study is backronymy, which designates ludic phrases serving as alternative interpretations of existing acronyms and non-acronyms. The phenomenon under study lies within the domain of lexicology (including phraseology). Yet, backronymy constitutes a peripheral onomastic fact: it does not allow for the formation of new proper names per se but rather contributes to the ludic reinterpretation of existing ones through their (re)acronymization, the novel alternative meaning being literally "constructed in the process of communication" (Golubkova & Zakharova 2016: 37).

Previous work on backronymy, which belongs to the area of lexicology, has been limited primarily to its onomasiological aspect studied upon Russian language evidence (Журавлев 1982; 2012; Зеленин 2005; Хуснуллина 2012). Although the phenomenon is not uncommon in English as well as other languages worldwide (vide infra 3.3 *PBs in diverse language families and language groups*), its occurrence in academic literature proves not only relatively rare but also inevitably supplementary to

other research objects, for instance acronyms (Mahadin 2011; Makkai 1972; Mattiello 2013; Tisserand 2006; Tosun 2018) or language games (Žyško 2017). This may explain the fact that the information available on backronyms is confined to attempts at definition and exemplification, with no account of properties, heterogeneity, or interrelation with similar phenomena. The novelty of the present paper consists in addressing backronymy as a novel self-sufficient research object, with a focus on the evidence collected from nine Germanic languages.

2. Database and methodology

The aim of the present article is to outline the ambit, investigate the formation patterns, and explore the genetic, graphic, semantic, and structural diversity of poreionymic backronyms (PBs), i.e. phrases serving as alternative interpretations of acronyms and non-acronyms designating car brands. It is noteworthy that even though poreionymy embraces names of a vast variety of vehicles performing miscellaneous functions, the focus of this article is restricted to car brands as by far the most widely used means of transport the world over.

Proceeding from the aim of the article, the following research questions are addressed:

a) what a backronym and, more specifically, a PB is; b) what linguistic phenomena it correlates with, in what manner, and to what extent; c) whether backronymy is restricted to a particular language family / group and why; d) what classes of PBs might be delimited in keeping with the heterogeneity and multiformity of the phenomenon.

Prior to approaching the issue of backronymy per se, it is necessary to disambiguate several terms used recurrently throughout the article. An *acronym* is defined as any type of shortening (which is taken to mean any subtractive process presupposing word segmentation and resulting in the emergence of a new lexeme (Borys 2018: 1) constructed from the word-initial letters of the shortened phrase and pronounced as a letter sequence or as an ordinary word (Adams 1987: 136-137; Gary Miller 2014: 148;

Kreidler 1979: 3-6; Minkova & Stockwell 2009: 16-17; Plag 2003: 127). An *expansion* is understood as a phrase that undergoes shortening and, thus, produces an acronym, with the referent being left unchanged. It is noteworthy that the term *expansion* is utilized retrospectively, i.e. designates the original phrase after the formation of the acronym and exclusively in the context of the latter.

The present research may be subdivided into five stages.

The first stage is *selection of the material for the linguistic investigation*. The database of the present research is 317 backronyms. Since alternative interpretations of acronyms and non-acronyms designating car brands are not listed in dictionaries at all, it is modern network communication that serves as the main source of the empirical material. Therefore, our selection is based on car users' and amateur linguists' Internet forums and humour compilations (vide infra **Abbreviations linking to empirical data sources**). Although the scope of the article is reduced to nine languages of the Germanic group (Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, German, Icelandic, Letzeburgesch, Norwegian, and Swedish), the overall number of languages admitting the phenomenon under investigation and supplied in this study with at the very least one example amounts to 25, embracing the Indo-European, Finno-Ugric, and Turkic families (vide infra 3.3 *PBs in diverse language families and language groups*).

The second stage is *verification of the spelling and grammar of every single backronym*. This stage is indispensable in view of the fact that online contributions are generally made anonymously, so the literacy and grammar skills of each contributor may and do vary greatly. Frequent were the cases of missing diacritics, letter omission or displacement, citing foreign-language examples inaccurately, or even blending two closely related languages together (for instance, Norwegian and Swedish, or Polish and Czech).

The third stage is ***translation of all the non-English backronyms into English***. Since the language of the article is English, it is of crucial importance to found the comparative analysis on a certain "common denominator", i.e. commensurable examples in the same language. All the English translations throughout the present research were made by the authors. Any already available English renditions online were double-checked and underwent language editing. Although certain translations may be judged as semantically, grammatically, or syntactically unnatural, it was deemed paramount to render each phrase as close to the original as possible, with a focus, if necessary, on the semantic, grammatical, and syntactic anomalies aimed at producing the effect of defeated expectation upon the recipient, as in the English *crazy and demented idiots like large American cars* (unsubstantiated semantic redundancy) for *Cadillac*, *Detroit's angry towards sneaky unscrupulous Nips* (incorrect adjectival rection) for *Datsun*, and *screwed up beyond all repair usually* (misplacement of a frequency adverb) for *Subaru* respectively.

The fourth stage is ***elaboration of PB taxonomy***. The prerequisite for delimiting backronymy from acronymy and other semantically related phenomena is transformational analysis. The other methods applied in the elaboration of a fully-fledged typology of backronyms (placed in the order of their importance) include:

- 1) derivational, conceptual, and etymological analyses for a genetic classification of backronyms;
- 2) graphemic and comparative analyses for a graphic classification of backronyms;
- 3) comparative and, occasionally, morphemic analyses for a structural classification of backronyms;
- 4) axiological, componential, and conceptual analyses for a semantic classification of backronyms.


The fifth stage is ***linguistic interpretation and theorization of the research findings***. Based on the heterogeneity and multiformity of the material investigated, a definition

of the PB is synthesized as well as the correlation of backronymy with similar linguistic phenomena is outlined.

3. Defining and disambiguating backronymy

Prior to approaching the notion of backronymy, it is indispensable to identify the scope of linguistic phenomena it designates as well as the notions, with which it is likely to be confused.

3.1 *Backronym as a semantic triad: Evolution*

Although the term **backronym** was coined only as recently as in 1983, allegedly by Meredith G. Williams in "The Washington Post" (Blount 2011: 214), the earliest known instance of the phenomenon dates back to the 2nd c. A.D. in Ancient Greek and features the non-acronym *ἰχθύς*, or 'fish'. When capitalized, *ΙΧΘΥΣ*, however, acquired a new sense – *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ* 'Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour', thus becoming associated with Jesus Christ and Christians in general. Furthermore, early Christians were said to use the graphic representation of the profile of a fish, depicted as two intersecting arcs with the ends of the right side extending beyond the meeting point () as a secret symbol, now known colloquially as the *Jesus fish*. The sign is still found on the bumpers and tailgates of many modern cars (Wilton 2004: 83).

Arguably the first backronym in the English language (and, seemingly, in Germanic languages) was *cabal*, which in the late 16th c. designated the names of five ministers of King Charles II who were blamed for closing the exchequer in 1670, starting a war with Holland in 1672, and entering into an alliance with the French in 1673 – *Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, and Lauderdale* (ibid., 83-84).

Nowadays the term **bac(k)ronym** is employed in three senses. Firstly, it refers to a phrase or sentence constructed from the letters of a word treated as an acronym but

which was not originally an acronym (Charlesworth 2007: X; O'Conner & Kellerman 2009: 152; Wilton 2004: 82), for example *START* standing for *Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty* (Wilton 2004: 82). Secondly, it designates a phrase or sentence constructed from the letters of an already existing acronym (Bruns 2007: 109), for instance *YMCA* reinterpreted as *your money cheerfully accepted* (Mattiello 2013: 86). Thirdly, it is taken to mean a word that produces another word when read backward, for example, the word pair *lived* and *devil* (Abootty 2004: 197).

The discrepancy between the first and the second senses of ***backronym*** boils down to whether the original item is an acronym or a non-acronym. However, the subsequent transformation sequence proves identical: each consequent constituent letter of the (non-)acronym starts representing the initial letter of each consequent word in the expansion phrase. Therefore, it is proposed to use the term ***pseudo-acronym***, which designates a word that has been given a false acronymic etymology (Algeo 1975: 230). In the present study, the latter term is taken to mean a non-acronymic word that is reinvented as an acronym by merely capitalizing all its graphemic constituents.

With regard to the third sense, its relevance as yet another lexico-semantic variant of the term ***backronym*** is highly controversial. Firstly, its motivation proves half obscure: whilst the component ***back-*** clearly correlates with the semantics of the whole word (implying reading backward), the component ***-ronym*** (or, with presumable word overlapping, ***-(a)(ck)ronym***) appears semantically and functionally empty, referring neither to a proper name (or ***onym***), nor to an abbreviated word of any kind (namely, ***acronym***). Secondly, the phenomenon denoted as a backronym by Abootty (2004: 197) is already known in linguistics by another name – semordnilap. A semordnilap is defined as "a word that means one thing when read forward and another when read backward" (Elster 2014: 336), e.g., *drawer* – *reward* (McKean 2006: 198).

Accordingly, specifying the definition of the phenomenon proposed earlier (Borys & Garmash 2019: 61), a **PB** is treated in the present study as an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent represented by a car brand being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. Whilst the original (pseudo-)acronym is evaluatively neutral, e.g., *VW* (for *Volkswagen*), the resulting expansion is endowed with either positive or negative evaluation, e.g., *vidunderlig vogn* 'wonderful car' in Danish (TW) or *volkomen waardeloos* 'completely worthless' in Dutch (DS) respectively. The reinterpretation realized in the creation of backronyms allows for categorizing the overwhelming majority of the latter, including PBs, as ludic innovations, which contain an inherent historical component that is profoundly culturally bound, interactive, and highly functional (Moulin 2018: 262). Therefore, the key functions of poreionymic backronymy deducible from the definition include the semantically relevant ludicity, periphrasticity, and dysphemisticity as well as the structurally relevant redundancy.

3.2 *Backronymy vs other linguistic phenomena*

In view of their insufficient coverage in academic studies (vide supra 1. *Introduction*) and variability of the ambit (vide supra 3.1 *Backronym as a semantic triad: Evolution*), backronyms can occasionally be confused with other peripheral linguistic phenomena, namely *acrostics*, *apronyms*, *disabbreviations*, and *recursive acronyms*.

3.2.1 *Backronym vs acrostic*

The term *acrostic* is employed nowadays in three senses, which will be referred to hereafter as the *conventional*, the *broad*, and the *narrow*.

In the *conventional sense*, an acrostic is viewed as a poem, in which the first letters of successive lines form, when read vertically, its subject (Longman III 1993: 86; Rosen 2015: 403). Since the present research is not concerned with poetics or rhetoric, this sense proves irrelevant to the present research.

However, the incessant fusion of diverse branches of linguistics, which has been underway for several decades now and which inevitably results in more or less massive terminological interchange, has gradually contributed to the migration of the term far beyond the domain of poetics. Thus, the original concept extended to designating, in the *broad sense*, any series of words, names, or lines (in a script or poem), the first letters of which are used as initials in another series serving as a mnemonic for the former (Searleman & Herrmann 1994: 353). Correlating this broad understanding with the lexicocentricity of the present research and approaching it in the vein of lexical semantics, an acrostic may be defined as a reexpanded aide-memoire acronym whose connection with the expansion phrase is purely conventional.

From this perspective, a distinctive feature of acrostics is the seemingly illogical formation of the resulting expansion phrase (initially representing an ordinary phrase) – prior to the formation of the acronym per se. A good example would be the English phrase *Richard of York gave battle in vain*, which serves for memorizing the sequence of the seven spectral colours in a rainbow, namely *red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet*. Yet, the fictitious anthroponym *Roy G. Biv*, which is the actual intermediary link between the two expansions, was coined later.

A liminal instance of acrosticky is when the acronym correlating the original expansion phrase with the resulting one is explicitly missing, being preserved only implicitly – in the initial letters of the constituent words of both expansion phrases. For example, the solar system planet names (*Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto*) are made easier to memorize by becoming associated with the sentence *men very easily make jugs serve useful nocturnal purposes* (Baine 1986: 95), where each successive word of the original expansion phrase is formally linked with its respective counterpart in the resulting expansion phrase by means of identical initial letters (M-V-E-M-J-S-U-N-P). However, there exists no such acronym as MVEMJSUNP in the English language. Similarly, in the case of the Slavonic

equivalents of the afore-mentioned English rainbow colour spectrum aide-memoire – the Belarusian *Чакаю апэтытных жабак зь беларускіх сажалак. Француз* (Дайнека 2005) 'I'm waiting for mouthwatering frogs from Belarusian frog ponds. Frenchman' (for *чырвоны, аранжавы, жоўты, зялёны, блакітны, сіні, фіялетава*) and the Russian *каждый охотник желает знать, где сидит фазан* (ibid.) 'every hunter wishes to know where a/the pheasant is hiding' (for *красный, оранжевый, жёлтый, зелёный, голубой, синий, фиолетовый*) – the respective intermediary acronyms *ЧАЖЗБСФ* and *КОЖЗГСФ* are simply non-existent.

It is equally noteworthy that mnemonic shortening does not boil down to acronymy alone and may involve other patterns, as is the instance of the German *syntactic blended acrostic* *Kilometertal – euer Urpokal*, literally meaning the nonsensical 'kilometer valley, your primordial cup', which serves an aide-memoire consolidating the names of the nine Muses: *Klio* (with the metathesis *-lio* to *-ilo-*), *Melpomene*, *Terpsichore*, *Thalia* (the retained segment *Thal-* is graphically adapted to *-tal* for convenience), *Euterpe*, *Erato*, *Urania*, *Polyhymnia*, and *Kalliope* (Wörtmann 2003: 91).

Deducible from the afore-mentioned broad definition is a far more specialized understanding of an acrostic, which, in the *narrow sense*, denotes an acronym, the pronunciation of which coincides with a homophone word in the same language (Conti & Mattiello 2008: 563). For instance, the acrostic *HOPE* stands for *Health Opportunity for People Everywhere* (Mattiello 2013: 90).

Whilst a backronym and an acrostic are both *reexpanded acronyms* (or, in the case of backronyms, these may equally be *expanded pseudo-acronyms*), i.e. they are based on shortening and totally depend on their resulting expansions in order to produce the desired stylistic effect, the difference between them manifests itself on two planes:

structural (concerning acrostics viewed in the broad sense) and semantic (concerning acrostics viewed in the narrow sense).

On the structural plane, formation of acrostics in the broad sense as reexpanded aide-memoire acronyms whose connection with the expansion phrase is purely conventional follows the pattern "original expansion phrase → [implicit intermediary acronym] → resulting expansion phrase (→ explicit intermediary acronym)". Conversely, backronymy presupposes strict compliance with the ontologically distinct pattern "original expansion phrase → acronym → resulting expansion phrase". The difference between the two patterns boils down to optionality of explicitness of an intermediate acronym in acrostics, which accounts for the fact that an acronym per se enters language lexicon (or becomes explicit) after the formation of the resulting expansion phrase, which may seem illogical at first sight. In the meantime, a backronym is always formed on the basis of an existing acronym or pseudo-acronym.

On the semantic plane concerning acrostics approached in the narrow sense, Mattiello claims that they "differ from backronyms (...) in that the latter either have a straightforward etymology (e.g., *Ford* from the founder's name) or an invented one ('First on race day')" (2013: 91). However, backronymy per se results from the invention of a new expansion phrase for an acronym (or a non-acronym), which coexists alongside its straightforward etymology. Therefore, any backronym balances both a straightforward etymology AND an invented one. Yet, a backronym always retains its original referent, merely highlighting some of its objective or subjective (attributed) characteristics in the resulting expansion phrase: compare the metonymically transferred founder's name [*Henry*] *Ford* and the expansion *first on race day*, which both denote a car of a particular brand. Conversely, an acrostic and its homophonic counterpart have obviously distinct referents: compare *hope* as a feeling and *HOPE* standing for *Health Opportunity for People Everywhere* as the name of a health organization.

3.2.2 Backronym vs apronym

An **apronym** – from blending *à propos* and *acronym* (Tisserand 2006: 57) – is an acronym that is expanded to a phrase "meaningful in the context of the term it stands for" (Mahadin 2011: 227), e.g., the English *USA PATRIOT [Act]* signifying *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism* (McKay 2009: 249).

Both an apronym and a backronym are self-definitional acronyms, which would suggest their uniformity, if not identity. However, the distinction between them becomes obvious while elaborating their formation patterns, which do not coincide.

In apronymy, the acronym and its expansion phrase are formed simultaneously, i.e. following the pattern "original expansion phrase → acronym/resulting expansion phrase". For instance, the Swedish pseudo-acronym *KRIS* standing for *kriminellas revansch i samhället* 'criminals' revenge on society' and denoting the Swedish organization providing people recently released from prison with a network that can help them to start a new life (Berglund & Skoglund 2016: 66) transparently correlates with the simplex *kris* 'crisis', since former convicts are likely to face stigma as well as difficulties in social reintegration. Makkai refers to units of this type as **punning acronyms** (1972: 345), whereas Mattiello names them **semantically-relevant acrostics** (2013: 90-91).

In backronymy, the formation of the expansion phrase always follows that of the acronym or non-acronym (which, thus, becomes a pseudo-acronym), i.e. complies with the patterns "original expansion phrase → acronym → resulting expansion phrase" or "non-acronym → pseudo-acronym → resulting expansion phrase". An instance of the latter is *karate* reinterpreted as *kicking athlete, reaching at taming emotions* (Tisserand 2006: 57). In this case, we are dealing with a pseudo-acronym deriving from a simplex (a borrowed compound from Japanese, which is nonetheless morphologically

indivisible in English) that refers to the memorization of one of the basic philosophical principles of karate – self-control – and is, therefore, self-definitional.

3.2.3 *Backronym* vs *disabbreviation*

The term ***disabbreviation*** is occasionally employed in Russian linguistics (Гладченкова 2012: 83; Журавлев 2012: 46; Хуснуллина 2012: 276) as an absolute synonym of the English term ***backronym(y)***. Etymologically, the word *disabbreviation* presents a calque of the Russian *дезаббревиация*, which was coined by Russian linguist Zhuravlev to name backronymy as one of the two types of secondary phrase formation, alongside transphraseologization (Журавлев 1982: 95). With regard to its morphological motivation, the ***disabbreviation*** presents an unobjectionable combination of the prefix ***dis-*** expressing regression and the term ***abbreviation***, which is typically identified in the Russian linguistic tradition with acronymy, and, thus, appears perfectly intelligible and self-explanatory.

Nonetheless, it has been rightfully claimed above that not all backronyms are formed from acronyms. A great many backronyms expand pseudo-acronyms – non-acronymic words that are reinvented as acronyms by merely having all their graphemic constituents capitalized. For instance, the car brand name *Ford* originates from the company founder's full surname and is, therefore, not an acronym. Yet, in Icelandic, it is assigned the expansion *fyrir okkur rugluðu drengina* 'for us, disturbed boys', thus transforming into a backronym.

Consequently, the term ***disabbreviation*** should be regarded not as a synonym but as a hyponym of ***backronym(y)***.

3.2.4 *Backronym* vs *recursive acronym*

A ***recursive acronym*** is an acronym that refers to itself in the expression for which it stands (Žyško 2017: 23), for instance the German *TikZ* for *TikZ ist kein*

Zeichenprogramm 'TikZ is not a drawing program', or the English OIL for Oil India Limited.

As can be seen from the examples, the original unit is always a pseudo-acronym assigned an expansion or an acronym assigned an alternative expansion. In either case, the resulting unit contains the original among its constituents (usually the initial constituent, as in both *TikZ* and *OIL*). Besides, the original and the resulting expansion phrases are associated with the same referent. On inductive grounds there is, therefore, sufficient evidence to claim that a recursive acronym constitutes a type of backronyms. A recursive acronym may thus be roughly defined as a "self-contained" backronym.

Considering all the above, the difference between backronymy, on the one hand, and acrosticky as well as apronymy, on the other, boils down to the incompatibility of their formation patterns. Conversely, both disabbreviation and recursive acronymy constitute specific instances of backronymy. Complying with two transformational patterns, i.e. "original expansion phrase → acronym → resulting expansion phrase" or "non-acronym → pseudo-acronym → resulting expansion phrase", backronymy meets all seven criteria for new word-formation (as delimited by Mattiello (2017: 28-29): transparency, regularity, productivity, decodification, informativity, mnemonic effect, and analogy.

3.3 PBs in diverse language families and language groups

Onomasiologically, backronyms reinterpret a vast variety of notions, designating political parties and movements; political / economic / social phenomena; jobs; educational establishments; cultural institutions; sports clubs; indoor spaces; machinery; weapons and ammunition; school subjects; emergency situations; humans (by appearance / behaviour / character) (Зеленин 2005: 86-88). The present paper, however, focuses on *poreionyms* (within the thematic group of machinery), i.e. proper

names designating means of transportation (Подольская 1978: 112; Томасик 2012: 61-62), namely cars.

The highlight of this study is poreonymic backronymy in Germanic languages, namely **Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, German, Icelandic, Letzeburgesch, Norwegian, and Swedish**. The focus of the research on Germanic languages is due to several factors.

Firstly, English and, to a lesser degree, German are two of the dozen languages enjoying the status of contemporary *world languages*, based on the staggering number of speakers (both native and non-native); the official status in numerous countries; the high prestige; the multiethnicity and pluricentricity correlating with heterogeneous language varieties and dialects; the extensive use in international political, economic, and social relations; the significant bodies of literature; the popularity with language learners on the global scale; the preponderant use by the academic community. In addition, among the existing world languages, English is recognized to have special status, whilst its linguistically unprecedented dissemination across the globe is clearly reflected in the model of three concentric circles developed by Braj B. Kachru: the Inner Circle (the English language's traditional heartland: the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand), the Outer Circle (non-native countries where English is an official second language: Singapore, Kenya, India, etc.), and the Expanding Circle (countries where English does not have any official status but is used as an international language: China, Egypt, Japan, Russia, etc.) (Horobin 2018: 117-118).

Secondly, English features by far the largest amount of web content – estimated as 55% as of 2012 (Dailey-O'Cain 2017: 47). It is this factor that is vital for the present investigation, which totally relies on the evidence collected on car users' and, occasionally, amateur linguists' Internet forums.

Thirdly, since the highlight of this study is backronymy in proper names of cars, the economic welfare of English- and German-speaking countries, especially in Europe and North America, is equally important. Traditionally ranking highly worldwide, the purchasing power of an average citizen of the USA, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, or Norway allows him or her to be less mentally dependent on material goods. Back in the early 20th c., owning a car was viewed as a luxury; nowadays it is treated as a mere necessity instead. This economically driven depreciation of material goods would inevitably find its reflection in language. In backronymy, it is the irony (treated as a literary device exploiting a reversal of meaning, i.e. an intentional use of the literal meaning of a phrase in order to evoke the contrary or contradictory meaning (Wilson & Sperber 2012: 123-124)) alongside the occasional sarcasm, which serve the purpose of connotatively depreciating diverse car brands.

Fourthly, Germanic languages employ the Latin alphabet, which, similarly to the Cyrillic one, allows for investigating *case-sensitive shortenings*. Studying backronymy in Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, or Japanese would be impossible since their graphic systems do not presuppose discrimination between uppercase and lowercase letters. As a result, acronyms (at least, in their traditional understanding) and the like phenomena involving the use of capitalization, no matter whether for the sake of language economy (as opposed to language redundancy (Litkovych, Smal & Yanovets 2020: 99) or mere ludicity, simply do not exist in such languages.

Yet, the scope of PBs extends far beyond the Germanic group.

Within the Indo-European language family, which includes the Germanic group, PBs are detectable in:

a) Baltic languages: **Lithuanian** *baisiai mandras Volksvagenas* 'extremely fancy Volkswagen' for *BMW* (BA);

- b) Romance languages: **French** *supérieure aux autres bagnoles* 'better than other cars' for *SAAB* (QU); **Italian** *fermati imbecille abbiamo tamponato* 'stop, you moron, we have rear-ended' for *FIAT* (DI); **Portuguese** *fui iludido, agora é tarde* 'I've been had, now it's too late' for *FIAT* (Cavallini 2008: 27-28); **Romanian** *dacă ai cap, iei altceva* 'if you're smart, you take something else' for *Dacia* (JA); **Spanish** *siempre estarás apretando tornillos* 'you will be tightening screws forever' for *SEAT* (PE);
- c) Slavonic languages: **Bulgarian** *бърка масло и вода* 'mixes oil and water' for *BMW* (TU); **Polish** *będziesz miał wydatki* 'it will cost you a lot' for *BMW* (NO); **Russian** *всеми обожжаемая лего Горьковского автопрома* 'the generally worshipped Lego by Gorky Automobile Plant' for *Volga* (PI); **Ukrainian** *бабки можуть все* 'money can do it all' for *BMW* (ZK).

Outside the Indo-European language family, examples of PBs are found in:

- a) Finno-Ugric languages: **Estonian** *ohtlik pask eesti liikluses* 'dangerous shit in Estonian transport' for *Opel* (CA); **Finnish** *on pakkasta en liiku* 'it's frosty, I'm not moving' for *Opel* (RC); **Hungarian** *buszon, metróon, villamoson* 'by bus, by metro, by tram' for *BMW* (GY);
- b) Turkic languages: **Kyrgyz** *машина аңдыган умтер* 'car-tracing dogs' for *MAI* as *Мамлекеттик Автоинспекция* 'State Automobile Inspectorate' (SU); **Turkish** *enayi biner oturmadan iner* 'dummy gets on and falls from his seat' for *EBOI* as *Edirne belediyesi otobüs işletmelerinin* 'Edirne Municipality Bus Operations' (Tosun 2018: 166).

The translinguistic nature of backronymy spanning diverse language groups within several families proves that, if peripheral, it falls within the scope of not only general linguistics, which typically relies on data from a range of languages in order to describe various phenomena in their wholeness and diversity as well as temporal and local continuity, but also of contrastive linguistics, aimed at establishing the isomorphic and allomorphic features of the phenomena juxtaposed.

4. Taxonomy of PBs

Since backronymy is becoming more and more common nowadays, a necessity arises to elaborate a fully-fledged typology of backronyms, based on diverse approaches, namely *genetic*, *graphic*, *structural*, and *semantic*.

4.1 Genetic classification

In accordance with the genetic approach, it is proposed to discriminate between *acronym-based backronyms* and *non-acronym-based backronyms*.

4.1.1 Acronym-based backronyms

An *acronym-based backronym* is an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. Acronyms are in no way uncommon among car brand names, the best known being:

- a) *AMC* (*American Motors Corporation*), reinterpreted as *all makes of cars* in English (EV);
- b) *BMW* (*Bayerische Motoren Werke*), reinterpreted as *BART / Muni / walking* (the reference to Bay Area Rapid Transit and the Muni Metro in San Francisco provides an additional, sociolinguistic, context) in San Francisco English (EV); *bättre med Wankelmotor* 'better with a Wankel engine' in Swedish (ME); *billig mands vogn* 'cheap man's car' in Danish (TW); *blijf maar werken* 'just keep working' in Dutch (RI); *blöde Mantawitze* 'stupid Manta jokes' (the reference to the popular German humour about the Mantafahrer, i.e. a stupid macho, having a blond girlfriend or wife, belonging to a lower social class, and driving his Opel Mantra fast and aggressively (Feyaerts 1999: 325), provides an additional, sociolinguistic, context) in German (CE);
- c) *FIAT* (*Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino*), reinterpreted as *farlig i alt trafik* 'dangerous in any traffic' in Danish (TW); *fietsen is achteraf troost* 'cycling afterwards is a consolation' in Dutch (RI); *fikset i alkoholisert tilstand* 'fixed in a drunken state' in Norwegian (VG); *ffjollor i antik traktor* 'queers in a pre-historic tractor' in Swedish

(ME); *flying in a Tupolev* in English (EV); *französisch-italienischer Affentransporter* 'Franco-Italian ape-carrier' in German (CE);

d) *GM* (*General Motors*), reinterpreted as *goddarned mess* in English (EV);

e) *GMC* (*General Motors Company*), reinterpreted as *generally mediocre cars* in English (EV);

f) *MB* (*Mercedes-Benz*), reinterpreted as *mechanics beware* in English (EV);

g) *MG* (*Morris Garages*), reinterpreted as *mobile garbage* in English (CI);

h) *SAAB* (*Svenska Aeroplan Aktiebolaget*), reinterpreted as *steeds allerlei abnormal bromgeluiden* 'constantly all kinds of abnormal humming sounds' in Dutch (RI); *svenskt arbete av blinda* 'Swedish work by the blind' in Swedish (ME); *Swedish automobile – always broken* in English (EV);

i) *SEAT* (*Sociedad Española de Automóviles de Turismo*), reinterpreted as *serienmäßig eingebaute Austauschteile* 'standard built-in replacement parts' in German (CE); *seriematige ellende als toekomst* 'standard misery in the future' in Dutch (RI); *skakar eller alstrar torv* 'shakes or produces peat' in Swedish (GA);

j) *VW* (*Volkswagen*), reinterpreted as *vettvillingar* 'madmen' in Swedish (ME); *vidunderlig vogn* 'wonderful car' in Danish (TW); *virulent wheels* in English (EV); *volkomen waardeloos* 'completely worthless' in Dutch (DS); *völlig wertlos* 'completely worthless' in German (CE).

Acronym-based backronyms may be regarded as prototypical backronyms since they constitute reinterpretations of existing acronyms. The reinterpretations prove to be negative in the overwhelming majority of cases, the depreciation of the referents (i.e. car brands) extending from primary to secondary. **Primary depreciation** manifests itself through pointing to the attributed drawbacks of the vehicle per se, both real (through the use of such words as *abnormal*, *broken*, *cheap*, *dangerous*, *goddarned*, *mediocre*, *mess*, *misery*, *prehistoric*, *shakes*, *virulent*, and *worthless*) and potential (with the help of the word *replacement* as well as the phrases *better with a [...] engine*, *cycling afterwards*, *keep working*, *mechanics beware*, and *misery in the future*).

Secondary depreciation relies on degrading either its user, i.e. driver (*Manta[fahrer]*) or passenger(s) (*queers*), or its manufacturer (*fixed in a drunken state and work by the blind*), with the ultimate intention to disparage the car brand.

4.1.2 Non-acronym-based backronyms

A **non-acronym-based backronym** is an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. The majority of car brand names are formed by means other than acronymization, which include metonymization, metaphorization, compounding, blending, clipping, and borrowing.

4.1.2.1 Metonymic poreionym-based backronyms

In accordance with cognitivist semantics, which may itself be defined as a mapping from linguistic expressions to cognitive structures (Gärdenfors 1999: 20), **poreionymic metonymization** constitutes a process providing mental access to an entity, represented by a car brand, through another entity, represented by the founder / inventor / producer of the brand or by the place where it is manufactured, within the same domain.

A distinctive feature of the metonymic poreionym-based backronyms is that they constitute expansions of secondary eponyms (names of car brands), which, in their turn, are semantically derived from existing anthroponyms (and, occasionally, toponyms). Thus, metonymic poreionym-based backronymy rests on resemantization of existing secondary eponyms, thus endowing them with alternative content.

The most typical pattern is when the founder's / inventor's / producer's surname is the vehicle and the car brand name is the target. The examples based on such eponyms are numerous in our sample:

- a) *Benz* (after *Karl Friedrich Benz*), reinterpreted as *because engineers know Zen* in English (this is a rare instance of phonetic backronymy, with a focus on initial

phonemes instead of graphemes: *know* /*nəʊ*/) (EV); *bei Elchtest nicht zuverlässig* 'not reliable in the moose test' (the reference to the incident which took place in Sweden in 1997 when the journalist Robert Collin from the motor magazine "Teknikens Värld" overturned the new Mercedes-Benz in the test designed to check the ease with which the model could be steered around an animal such as a moose appearing on the highway, whereas a much older and widely mocked Trabant managed the same test perfectly (Lancaster & Massingham 2011: 266), provides an additional, sociolinguistic, context) in German (CE);

b) *Bugatti* (after *Ettore Bugatti*), reinterpreted as *bangin' underground gangsta attitude trumps techy image* in English (JA);

c) *Buick* (after *David Dunbar Buick*), reinterpreted as *big ugly indestructible car killer* in English (EV);

d) *Cadillac* (after *Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac*), reinterpreted as *crazy and demented idiots like large American cars* in English (EV);

e) *Chevrolet* (after *Louis Chevrolet*), reinterpreted as *cheap, hardly efficient, virtually runs on luck every time* in English (EV); *creëert heel erg veel rook of loopt ellendig traag* 'produces an awful lot of smoke or runs agonizingly slowly' in Dutch (RI);

f) *Chrysler* (after *Walter Chrysler*), reinterpreted as *can hear revs, yet sense little engine reaction* in English (JA);

g) *Citroën* (after *André-Gustave Citroën*), reinterpreted as *claxon indrukken terwijl roestig onderdeel even nivelleert* 'press the horn while the rusty part briefly flattens' in Dutch (DS); *crap interior, terrible road-holding, owned entirely by nutters* in English (JA);

h) *Daewoo* (after *Kim Woo-jung*), reinterpreted as *damn Asian engineering works only occasionally* in English (CR); *deze afgekeurde ellendige wagen oogt onbruikbaar* 'this criticized miserable car looks unusable' in Dutch (RI);

i) *Dodge* (after *Horace Elgin Dodge* and *John Francis Dodge*), reinterpreted as *drips oil, drops grease everywhere* in English (EV);

- j) *Ferrari* (after *Enzo Ferrari*), reinterpreted as *fanatieke egoïstische rakkers rijden allemaal rasechte Italianen* 'fanatic egoistic rascals all drive pure Italians' in Dutch (EV); *Ferrari er rigtig røde automobiler rejsende indenlands* 'Ferrari are true red cars circulating inside the country' in Danish (TW); *fragile, expensive rides repel all reasonable individuals* in English (JA);
- k) *Ford* (after *Henry Ford*), reinterpreted as *fejl og rustne døre* 'faults and rusty doors' in Danish (TW); *félag organdi rass dýrkenda* 'screaming ass worshippers' club' in Icelandic (MB); *fiks og reparerer daglig* 'fix and repair daily' in Norwegian (VG); *Ford onderdelen rammelen dagelijks* 'Ford parts rattle daily' in Dutch (DS); *forlorn, old, rat-ridden dustbin* in English (EV); *ful och riktigt dålig* 'ugly and really bad' in Swedish (ME); *für Osis reicht der* 'enough for Osis' in German (CE);
- l) *Honda* (after *Soichiro Honda*), reinterpreted as *heel oud nutteloos dom autootje* 'very old useless stupid car' in Dutch (RI); *höllischer Orgasmus nach dem Anfahren* 'hellish orgasm after starting' in German (CE); *hon orkar nästan dagens arbete* 'it can almost work today' in Swedish (GA); *hunk of nasty dung, always* in English (EV);
- m) *Maserati* (after *Alfieri Maserati*), reinterpreted as *must also suggest extra rope and towing implements* in English (CR);
- n) *Mazda* (after *Jujiro Matsuda*), reinterpreted as *många... alla zigenares drömbil alltså* 'in other words, many... all Gypsies' dream car' in Swedish (GA); *miles at zero, dead anyway* in English (EV); *miserabele auto zonder degelijke afwerking* 'miserable car with no happy ending' in Dutch (DS); *Müll auf zwei drehenden Achsen* 'rubbish on two rotating axes' in German (CE);
- o) *Opel* (after *Adam Opel*), reinterpreted as *Olle Perssons elektriska låda* 'Olle Persson's electric box' (the reference to the popular Swedish opera singer Hans Olle Persson provides an additional, sociolinguistic, context) in Swedish (GA); *onderweg panne en lekkage* 'breakdowns and leakage en route' in Dutch (RI); *op på en lift* 'up on a lift' in Danish (HE); *optische Perfektion ersetzt Leistung* 'visual perfection replaces performance' in German (CE); *ousted problematic export leaker* in English (EV);

- p) *Peugeot* (after *Armand Peugeot*), reinterpreted as *people ever unhappy, goes every other turd* in English (CO); *pippa ej utan gummi en omgång till* 'do not have another round of sex without a condom' in Swedish (ME); *probeer eens uw geluk en ondervind trammelant* 'try your luck once and experience a fuss' in Dutch (DS); *Produkt eines unterentwickelten gehirntoten Europäers ohne Technik* 'product of an underdeveloped ditzy European without technology' in German (CE);
- q) *Porsche* (after *Ferdinand Porsche*), reinterpreted as *probeer onze rotzooi: start chaotisch, heel erbarmelijk* 'try our rubbish: chaotic start, very pathetic' in Dutch (RI); *proof only rich suckers can have everything* in English (EV);
- r) *Renault* (after *Louis Renault, Marcel Renault, and Fernand Renault*), reinterpreted as *rampspoed en narigheid achtervolgen u lange tijd* 'disaster and misery will haunt you for a long time' in Dutch (EV); *retarded engine, no acceleration, ugly lump of trash* in English (CI); *rostet einfach nicht, außer unter lackierten Teilen* 'does not rust, except beneath painted parts' in German (CE);
- s) *Škoda* (after *Emil Škoda*), reinterpreted as *sakta kör ofta druckna absolutister* 'drunk teetotallers often drive slowly' in Swedish (ME); *samen knutselen onder de auto* 'DIYing together under the car' in Dutch (RI); *skal kassere og dræbe alt* 'must discard and destroy everything' in Danish (TW); *so kennen Osis das Auto* 'Osis know the car as such' in German (CE);
- t) *Suzuki* (after *Michio Suzuki*), reinterpreted as *sadly uninspired zip ultimately kills it* in English (JA); *sinnlose, unzusammenhängende Zusammenstellung unzähliger Konstruktionsirrtümer* 'senseless, incoherent compilation of countless design mistakes' in German (CE);
- u) *Toyota* (after *Kiichiro Toyoda*), reinterpreted as *too often Yankees overprice this auto* in English (EV); *totaal onveilig Japans ontwerp tegen afval prijs* 'totally unsafe Japanese design at waste price' in Dutch (DS).

In two instances, however, poreionymic metonymization is based on a slightly modified version of the above pattern: the founder's / inventor's / producer's relative's first name becomes the vehicle, while the target remains the same – the car brand:

a) *Edsel* (after *Edsel Bryant Ford*, son of Henry Ford), reinterpreted as *even Dad says Edsel's lame* in English (this is a rare instance of recursive acronymy when the resulting expansion *even Dad says Edsel's lame* contains the original unit *Edsel* as its non-initial constituent, which becomes possible due to the availability of two *E*'s in *Edsel*) (EV);

b) *Mercedes* (after *Mercédès Jellinek*, daughter of Emil Jellinek), reinterpreted as *med en rullande champion envisades den ettrige stofilen* 'the hot-tempered old fogeys insisted on one rolling champion' in Swedish (ME); *meines Erachtens richtiges Chaos, erreicht durch eigene Schuld* 'in my opinion, real chaos with no one but oneself to blame' in German (CE); *money envy reliably causes every derogatory expletive to surface* in English (CI); *motorisch, exclusief rommelig, carrosserie echt doorgerot en slecht* 'motorized, exclusively messy, the bodywork is really corroded and bad' in Dutch (RI).

In yet another pattern of poreionymic metonymization, the place where the car brand was founded or is manufactured is the vehicle and the car brand is the target, as is the case of *Pontiac*, named after Pontiac, a city in Michigan, and reinterpreted as *Polizeiautos ohne neuen TÜV initiieren Autocrashes* 'police cars without new MOT cause car crashes' in German (CE); *poor old ninny thinks it's a Cadillac* in English (EV).

Overall, the metonymic poreionym-based backronyms constitute the largest group of non-acronym-based backronyms. As in the case of the acronym-based backronyms, the novel reinterpretations are predominantly negative. Although the primary eponyms are represented by anthroponyms, wherefrom it could be deduced that secondary depreciation referring to the inventor or manufacturer should be more common than in

acronym-based backronyms, this does not seem to be the case. **Primary depreciation** predominates, featuring such references to the vehicle's drawbacks as *breakdowns*, *crap interior*, *faults*, *grease [dropped]*, *leakage*, *oil [dripping]*, *parts rattl[ing]*, and *run[ning] on luck*, as well as the attributes *bad*, *cheap*, *corroded*, *dead*, *forlorn*, *hardly efficient*, *hellish*, *incoherent*, *lame*, *miserable*, *nasty*, *not reliable*, *old*, *pathetic*, *rat-ridden*, *rusty*, *senseless*, *slow*, *stupid*, *terrible*, *ugly*, *unsafe*, *unusable*, and *useless*. The car is also identified with *box*, *car killer*, *chaos*, *disaster*, *dung*, *dustbin*, *misery*, and *rubbish / trash*. **Secondary depreciation** is far less common, most frequently focusing on the driver (*ass worshippers*, *crazy and demented idiots*, *drunk teetotallers*, *fanatic egoistic rascals*, *old fogeys*, *nutters*, and *rich suckers*) and occasionally – on the passenger (*goes every other turd* and *repel all reasonable individuals*), or the manufacturer (*underdeveloped ditzy European*). Secondary depreciation also actively exploits national and racial stereotypes, using the ethnonyms *American*, *Asian*, *European*, *Gypsies*, *Italians*, *Japanese*, *Ossis*, and *Yankees* with implicit depreciation as well as the racial slur *ninny* with explicit depreciation. Thus, the lack of correlation between the primary eponym and its backronymic reinterpretation points to a totally ludic nature of metonymic poreionym-based backronymy as such.

4.1.2.2 Metaphoric poreionym-based backronyms

In keeping with the cognitivistic paradigm, **poreionymic metaphorization** constitutes a projection from a source domain to a target domain, which is always represented by a car brand. In general, conceptual metaphorization of CAR as ONE'S FAMILY MEMBER or A LOVED ONE is extensively used in advertising (Kövecses 2018: 128). However, we have identified five novel conceptual metaphors of CAR in our study:

- a) THE CAR IS AN ANIMAL: *Jaguar* (after *jaguar* – a large spotted wild cat species), reinterpreted as *jarenlang allerlei gecompliceerde unieke autotechnische revisies* 'for years all kinds of complicated unique MOT tests' in Dutch (DS); *just a guess U are rich* in English (CR); *Mustang* (after *mustang* – a free-roaming feral horse), reinterpreted as *messed up shit that ain't no good* in English (EV); *Pinto* (after *pinto*

horse – a horse whose coat colour combines large patches of white with any other colour), reinterpreted as *paid inspector nicely to overlook* in English (EV);

b) THE CAR IS A SHIP: *Corvette* (after *corvette* – a small maneuverable warship), reinterpreted as *could old Roy Vector eat the tires evenly* in English (EV); *Lada* (after *lada* – a Viking longship), reinterpreted as *laget av diverse avfall* 'made from miscellaneous rubbish' in Norwegian (VG); *langs achter duwen alstublieft* 'please push from behind' in Dutch (PS); *lavet af diverse affaldsdele* 'made of miscellaneous waste parts' in Danish (TW); *left at dump, abandoned* in English (PS); *letzter auf der Autobahn* 'last on the highway' in German (CE);

c) THE CAR IS A CELESTIAL BODY: *Subaru* (from the Japanese スバル 'the Pleiades star cluster M45'), reinterpreted as *schwache und bescheidene Arbeit ramponiert Unfallstatistik* 'weak and crappy work worsens accident statistics' in German (CE); *screwed up beyond all repair usually* in English (EV); *steeds uitermate belachelijke abnormale rammelende uitvindingen* 'always extremely ridiculous abnormal rattling inventions' in Dutch (DS);

d) THE CAR IS THE PRESENT: *Hyundai* (from the Korean 現代 'modernity'), reinterpreted as *how your usual nerd drives an import* in English (EV);

e) THE CAR IS THE FUTURE: *Probe* (after *probe* – a small, usually unmanned, spacecraft used to acquire information or measurements about its surroundings – to highlight its futuristic design), reinterpreted as *probably runs on belching engines* in English (EV).

All the conceptual metaphors revealed above are monomodal, since they exploit only one medium, i.e. written verbal communication, as opposed to multimodal and hypermodal ones, which are intrinsic, for instance, to Internet memes (Morozova 2017: 251-252). Of the five conceptual metaphors identified, the first juxtaposes the speed, strength, and stamina of animals with those of car brands; the second correlates the power and maneuverability of vessels with car brands; the third parallels the

remoteness and inaccessibility of a constellation with that of a car brand; the fourth and fifth project the notion of time (moving WITH time or AHEAD OF time) upon that of car brands. Thus, it is not only time that is interpreted in terms of other entities (as in conceptual metaphors of time (Konnova & Babenko 2019) but other entities (e.g., car brands) can also be interpreted in terms of time.

4.1.2.3 Compound poreionym-based backronyms

Poreionymic compounding is based on combining two or more full stems into one car brand name. The present study contains five examples thereof:

- a) *Datsun* (from *DAT* [*Motorcar Co.*] + *sun*), reinterpreted as *Detroit's angry towards sneaky unscrupulous Nips* in English (CI); *diese Autos töten sanft unsere Nation* 'these cars gently kill our nation' in German (CE);
- b) *Kia* (from 起 'to come out' + 亞 '(East) Asia'), reinterpreted as *kan ikke accelerere* 'cannot accelerate' in Danish (HE); *keep inside Asia* in English (CR); *keiner ist alberner* 'nobody is silly' in German (CE); *konstig i allmänhet* 'weird in general' in Swedish (BO); *koreansk industri avfall* 'Korean industrial garbage' in Norwegian (VG); *kuchend irritante auto* 'annoying coughing car' in Dutch (RI);
- c) *Mitsubishi* (from the Japanese 三 'three' + 菱 'rhombus'), reinterpreted as *met interessante techniek speciaal uitgevoerde bakfiets in slechte hedendaagse improvisatie* 'using interesting technology, specially exported carrier tricycle in poor modern improvisation' in Dutch (DS); *Modell ist technischer Schrott und Blech ist sowieso höchst instabil* 'the model is technical scrap and the metal is highly unstable anyway' in German (CE); *mostly in the shop undergoing big investments, sometimes halfway incomplete* in English (EV);
- d) *Oldsmobile* (from [*Ransom Eli*] *Olds* + *-mobile*), reinterpreted as *overpriced, leisurely driven sedan made of Buick's irregular leftover equipment* in English (EV);
- e) *Volkswagen* (from the German *Volk* 'people, folk' + interfix *-s-* + *Wagen* 'car'), reinterpreted as *vehicle of loser Krauts some wacky Austrian guy endorsed nationally* in English (EV).

All the collected compound poreionym-based backronyms constitute negative reinterpretations, which are expressed not only through primary depreciation (with the help of the labels *carrier tricycle*, *garbage*, and *scrap* as well as the attributes *annoying*, *coughing*, *incomplete*, *irregular*, *overpriced*, *unstable*, and *weird*), but also through an extensive use of ethnonyms with implicit depreciation, like *Asia*, *Austrian*, and *Korean*, as well as of the downright disparaging ethnic slurs, like *Krauts* and *Nips*.

4.1.2.4 Blended poreionym-based backronyms

Poreionymic blending presupposes a combination of two or more word segments, which form a new word. The blended car brand names include:

- a) *Mopar* (from *motor* + *parts*), reinterpreted as *miscellaneous oddball parts assembled ridiculously* in English (EV);
- b) *Nissan* (from the Japanese 日本 'Japan' + 産業 'industry'), reinterpreted as *na iedere start snel alles nakijken* 'check everything quickly after every start' in Dutch (DS); *nahezu indiskutabel schlechter Schrott aus Nippon* 'almost unacceptably bad scrap from Nippon' in German (CE); *needs improved safety system at night* in English (EV); *Nissan i skrotigt skick anses ny* 'Nissan in scrappy condition considered new' in Swedish (BO).

Apart from constituting exclusively negative reinterpretations with primary and secondary depreciation, the blended poreionym-based backronyms under study feature a rare instance of what we propose to call a **recursive backronym**, i.e. a backronym that refers to itself in the expression for which it stands: *Nissan i skrotigt skick anses ny* 'Nissan in scrappy condition considered new'.

4.1.2.5 Clipped poreionym-based backronyms

Poreionymic clipping is the formation of a car brand name by reducing the original word to one of its parts. In both identified examples, it is the final part that becomes deleted:

- a) *Audi* (from *Audiwerke*), reinterpreted as *accelerates under demonic influence* in English (EV); *alltid under ditt inflytande* 'always under your influence' in Swedish (ME); *als u duwen interesseert* 'if you are interested in pushing' in Dutch (DS); *außergewöhnliche und dumme Innenausstattung* 'exceptional and stupid interior' in German (CE);
- b) *Yugo* (from *Yugoslavia*), reinterpreted as *Yugoslavian ugly goat oil* in English (EV).

The idiosyncrasy of the clipped poreionym-based backronyms under investigation is that, unlike all the other genetic groups of backronyms, they feature a unique example of a zoonym (*goat*) that is used alongside an ethnonym (*Yugoslavian*) and an attribute (*ugly*) to reinforce secondary depreciation.

4.1.2.6 Borrowed poreionym-based backronyms

Poreionymic borrowing has contributed to the formation of as many as two car brand names. In both instances, the source language is Latin, whilst the target languages are Japanese and Swedish respectively:

- a) *Acura* (from the Latin *acūtus* 'sharp(ened)'), reinterpreted as *Asia's curse upon rural America* in English (PS);
- b) *Volvo* (from the Latin *volvo* 'I roll'), reinterpreted as *vaxning och lagning varje onsdag* 'waxing and repairing every Wednesday' in Swedish (ME); *very odd-looking vehicular object* in English (EV); *volgende onderdeel ligt verder op* 'next part is further up' in Dutch (EV).

Similarly to the compound, blended, and clipped poreionym-based backronyms above, the collected borrowed poreionym-based backronyms constitute exclusively negative reinterpretations revealing primary and secondary depreciation.

4.2 Graphic classification

Assuming the graphic approach, it is proposed to divide backronyms into **graphically lucid** and **graphically obscure**.

A **graphically lucid backronym** is characterized by a thorough conformity of the capitals in the (pseudo-)acronym to the initials in the expansion phrase. This group comprises the overwhelming majority of PBs, e.g., the English *hope you understand nothing's drivable and inexpensive* for *Hyundai* (EV); the German *Motor ist total schwach und Bremsfallschirm ist sicherheitshalber hinten installiert* 'the engine is totally weak and the brake parachute is preventively installed behind' for *Mitsubishi* (CE). In each of the examples above, every letter of the poreionym coincides with the respective initial in the expansion phrase, i.e. *Hyundai* → *h- y- u- n- d- a- i-*, and *Mitsubishi* → *m- i- t- s- u- b- i- s- h- i-*.

A **graphically obscure backronym** is characterized by a partial conformity of the capitals in the (pseudo-)acronym to the initials in the expansion phrase. Graphic obscurity is normally due to the incompatibility of national alphabets, i.e. the presence of a particular letter in one graphic system and its absence in another. A brief contrastive study of the nine Germanic alphabets in question reveals their relative intercompatibility. With the basic 26-letter Latin alphabet taken as the tertium comparationis, i.e. the common comparative denominator, the allomorphic features include:

- a) letter addition: *Æ*, *Ø*, *Å* (Danish); *IJ* (Dutch); *Á*, *Ð*, *É*, *Í*, *Ó*, *Ú*, *Ý*, *Þ*, *Æ*, *Ö* (Icelandic); *Ä*, *Ë*, *É* (Letzeburgesch); *Æ*, *Ø*, *Å* (Norwegian); *Å*, *Ä*, *Ö* (Swedish);
- b) letter subtraction: *C*, *Q*, *W*, *Z* (Icelandic).

It is noteworthy that the letters with diacritics ignored when alphabetizing (for instance, *á*, *é*, *è*, *ê*, *ë*, *í*, *î*, *ï*, *ó*, *ô*, *ú*, *û*, and *ý* in Afrikaans) are not included in the list.

Concerning the letter addition, it does not generally complicate backronymization, since the overwhelming majority of manufacturers worldwide produce their cars for the international automobile market, which per se requires anglicizing the spelling of their brand names. The exceptions are rare: *Asüna* (Canada), *Citroën* (France), *ēfini* (Japan), *Gobron-Brillié* (France), *Jösse Car* (Sweden), *Özaltin* (Turkey), *Rengsjöbilen* (Sweden), *Škoda* (Czech Republic), *Tofaş* (Turkey). However, when reinterpreted, the diacritic signs in these poreionyms are simply ignored: thus, *Citroën* becomes *crap interior, terrible road-holding, owned entirely by nutters* in English (*ë* → *e[ntirely]*) (JA); *Škoda* is expanded to *sicher kein ordentliches deutsches Auto* 'certainly not a decent German car' in German (*š* → *s[icher]*) (CE) and to *sakta kör ofta druckna absolutister* 'often drunk teetotallers drive slowly' in Swedish (*š* → *s[akta]*) (ME).

As for the letter subtraction, the absence of a particular letter in the graphic system of a certain language means that it has to be transliterated. Transliteration is commonplace when the two languages use different graphic systems (e.g., English and Chinese, German and Russian, Swedish and Japanese, Danish and Georgian, Norwegian and Armenian, etc.). However, this phenomenon is far less regular when applied to languages utilizing the same alphabet, although not necessarily without certain idiosyncrasies of their own. Such is the case of Icelandic, which does not have the letters *C*, *Q*, *W*, and *Z*. Thus, *BMW* becomes *BMV*, expanded to *bílar meira en venjulega* 'cars more than usual' (*w* → *v[enjulega]*) (BM). Similarly, the grapheme *W* is missing from Lithuanian, which is not a Germanic language but equally uses the Latin alphabet, so *BMW* is reinterpreted as *baleika mėšlui vežti* 'tub to carry manure' (*w* → *v[ežti]*) (AN).

4.3 Structural classification

Adopting the structural approach, it is proposed to delimit ***complete substitution backronyms*** and ***partial substitution backronyms***.

A *complete substitution backronym* is an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted by means of replacing all the lexical (or, occasionally, morphemic) elements within the expansion. This form of backronymy applies to the overwhelming majority of the poreionyms under study.

Relying heavily on optionality, complete substitution not only extends the list of possible word combinations in the source language of the original poreionym, but equally manifests itself on a cross-linguistic level, allowing for backronym formation in diverse, often unrelated languages. The former, intralingual case may be well illustrated by Swedish, which reinterprets the name of its globally-known car manufacturer *VOLVO* in quite a number of ways: *varför orsaka lokala vägolyckor?* 'why cause local road accidents?'; *varning, olämplig leksak, välter ofta* 'warning, unsuitable toy, often overturns'; *var omtänksam lämna vägen omgående* 'be so kind as to leave the road immediately'; *välter ovanligt lätt vid omkörning* 'overturns unusually easily on overtaking'; *vem orkar laga vraket ordentligt?* 'who can repair the wreck properly?'; *vi oljar lagren varje onsdag* 'we oil the bearings every Wednesday'; *vi orsakar landets värsta olyckor* 'we cause the country's worst accidents'; *vraket ombedes lämna vägen omedelbart* 'the wreck is requested to leave the road immediately' (ME) to name but a few. The latter, translingual instance is best observed when a particular car brand is so universally popular that it becomes ingrained in diverse nations' humour, no matter how geographically, culturally, or mentally distant they are. Probably, the most prototypical example would be the German car manufacturer BMW. Yet, its supremacy over the overwhelming majority of its domestic and foreign counterparts does not purely boil down to sales figures or publicity, but manifests itself linguistically too. The three-letter acronym is short and memorable, which makes it a perfect object for backronymy not only in languages employing the Roman alphabet, but equally in those utilizing the Cyrillic one: compare the Polish *bardzo majętny wieśniak* 'a very wealthy villager' / *bardzo mądry wybór* 'a very wise choice' / *będziesz miał wydatki* 'it'll

cost you a lot' / *będziesz miał wypadek* 'you'll have an accident' / *bolid młodzieży wiejskiej* 'the rural youth's race car' / *bryka młodego więźnia* 'a young prisoner's cart' / *bryka musi warczeć* 'the cart must growl' (NO), on the one hand, and the Russian *бандитская машина воров* 'thieves' gangster car' / *безмерные возможности* 'immeasurable opportunities' / *боевая машина вотяков* 'Udmurts' battle car' / *большое мужское вождение* 'big male driving' / *быстрая машина вселенной* 'the fast car of the universe' (Зеленин 2005: 88), on the other.

A ***partial substitution backronym*** is an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted by means of replacing one or several of the lexical (or, occasionally, morphemic) elements within the expansion. This form of backronymy proves rare, its scope being seemingly confined to the source language of the poreionymic acronym, for instance, *bayerischer Müllwagen* 'Bavarian refuse lorry' or *Berliner Motorrad-Werke* 'Berlin motorcycle plant' for *BMW* (*Bayerische Motoren Werke*) in German (CE). Even less frequent (and undetected in Germanic languages as of now) are partial substitution backronyms possessing only one lexical replacement. Such is the case of the Russian backronym *Вьетнамский автозавод* 'Vietnamese Automobile Plant' for *BA3* (PI), originally expanded to *Волжский автомобильный завод* 'Volga Automobile Plant'.

4.4 Semantic classification

Drawing upon the semantic (namely, axiological) approach, distinction is made between ***evaluatively positive backronyms***, ***evaluatively negative backronyms***, and ***evaluatively ambivalent backronyms***.

An ***evaluatively positive backronym*** is an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted so as to foreground the advantages of using a particular car brand. In Germanic languages, evaluatively positive PBs occur rarely.

First and foremost, driving a car of a certain make may be seen as a status marker, which is the case of the German *bringt mir Weiber* 'brings me chicks' (CE) or the English *brings me women* for *BMW* (CI), with the car seen as a "chick magnet". Along with the status goes the need for self-empowerment, therefore the car comes to be treated as a means of asserting one's superiority over others, which is perfectly obvious in the German *mein Auto zerstört dein Auto* 'my car is destroying your car' for *Mazda* (WA). The positive reinforcement may equally stem from the prestige associated with using a specific car brand, for instance the Icelandic *bílar meira en venjulega* 'cars more than usual' for *BMW* (BM) emphasizing the established international reputation of the German car manufacturer.

An ***evaluatively negative backronym*** is an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted so as to foreground the disadvantages of using a particular car brand. It is by far the most common type of backronym in Germanic languages. The car's highlighted negative characteristics include:

- a) dilapidated appearance, for instance the English *horrible old lump of decrepit engineering nonsense* for *Holden* (JA); the German *Bollerwagen mit Wackelkontakt* 'handcart with a loose connection' for *BMW* (CE); the Icelandic *fatlað og ryðgað drasl* 'crippled and rusty junk' for *Ford* (MB);
- b) poor design, for instance the English *Can American designers invent lovely lines? Apparently, can't* for *Cadillac* (JA);
- c) low quality control, for instance the English *all loosely fitted accessories remain on motorway enraging others* for *Alfa-Romeo* (JA); the German *bayerischer Mistwagen* 'Bavarian crap car' for *BMW* (CE); the Norwegian *laget av diverse avfall* 'made from miscellaneous rubbish' for *Lada* (VG);
- d) malfunctions, for instance the Danish *fejl i alle tandhjul* 'faults in all gears' for *FIAT* (TW); the English *just another gearbox under annual repair* for *Jaguar* (JA); the German *besser man wandert* 'it's better to go on foot' for *BMW* (CE);

- e) poor technical condition, for instance the Afrikaans *blik met wielen* 'tin-can with wheels' for *BMW* (CA); the Danish *skubbes konstant over danske arealer* 'push constantly over the lands of Denmark' for *Škoda* (HE); the Dutch *roest en narigheid achtervolgen u lange tijd* 'rust and misery will haunt you for a long time' for *Renault* (DS); the English *cracked heads, every valve rattles, oil leaks every time* for *Chevrolet* (CR); the German *Busen müssen wackeln* 'bosom must wobble' for *BMW* (CE); the Norwegian *fikset i alkoholisert tilstand* 'fixed in a drunken state' for *FIAT* (VG); the Swedish *vid olycka lämna vraket omedelbart* 'in case of an accident, leave immediately' for *Volvo* (ME);
- f) declining popularity, for instance the English *had one, never did again* for *Honda* (JA); the German *besser Mercedes wählen* 'it's better to choose Mercedes' (CE); the Letzeburgesch *Bomi mam Weenchen* 'Granny with a trolley' for *BMW* (HO); the Norwegian *kan ikke anbefales* 'cannot be recommended' for *Kia* (VG);
- g) lack of prestige, for instance the Danish *vel organiseret lort verden over* 'well-arranged shit world over' for *Volvo* (HE); the English *aging, unfulfilled dentists' investment* for *Audi* (JA); the German *fährt in Autoklasse Trabant* 'belongs in the "Trabant" vehicle class' for *FIAT* (CE); the Icelandic *félag ofstækis ruslasafnara og drushludýrkenda* 'enthusiastic junk collectors' and jalopy worshippers' club' for *Ford* (MB); the Swedish *sådan kan ofta döda atmosfären* 'such can often kill the atmosphere' for *Škoda* (ME);
- h) inadequate price, for instance the English *big money waste* for *BMW* (PS).

An ***evaluatively ambivalent backronym*** is an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted so as to foreground either its positive or its negative characteristics depending on the pragmatics of the context of use. Such is the case of the German *bin maßlos wichtig* 'I'm extremely important' and *bin mordswichtig* 'I'm so damn important' for *BMW* (CE), which, if used by the driver / passenger of the car, may translate either the positive idea of self-affirmation, or the

negative idea of ostentatiousness and, therefore, lack of dignity and inferiority complex manifestation. If the backronyms are uttered by persons other than the driver / passenger of the car, they will very likely have a negative semantic charge, deriding the car user as pretentious. Another German example, *Ferrari in außergewöhnlicher Tarnung* 'Ferrari in exceptional camouflage' for *FIAT* (CE), may similarly point either to the car's hidden features as well as its underestimation in the global automobile market on the plus side, or to its unappealing appearance or else implicitly expressed non-competitiveness on the minus side, since no comparison is relevant between a luxury car and an economy-class car. All in all, evaluatively ambivalent backronyms are rather uncommon in Germanic languages.

What may account for the absolute quantitative superiority of evaluatively negative backronyms over the other two groups stems from the very aim of backronymy, which consists, as Zelenin puts it, in simplifying the usual and even prestigious yet cumbersome acronyms so that they fit the speakers' axiological scale, often involving unsophisticated streetwise humour (Зеленин 2005: 88).

If an attempt is made to transgress the boundaries of linguistic axiology and immerse into pure semantics, the afore-mentioned expansions of the PBs may equally be treated as resulting from *metonymization* and *metaphorization*. For instance, in the English *big money wasted* for *BMW*, the connection between the CAR as a means of transportation and its PRICE, or, in a more abstract manner, between the OBJECT and ITS QUALITIES, can be treated as a metonymical one.

The other two examples, the German *bin maßlos wichtig* 'I'm extremely important' and *bin mordswichtig* 'I'm so damn important' for *BMW*, present a more complicated combination of semantic shifts. On the one hand, the CAR may be seen as *personified* (Lakoff & Johnson 2008: 44) and described with the characteristics of a human being (*maßlos wichtig*), the metaphorical reinterpretation being based upon the analogies

between the animate and inanimate world (conceptual metaphor A CAR IS A PERSON). On the other hand, the stereotype of feeling pride and self-importance associated with owning an expensive car evidences that the car is the reflection of its owner's status and may equally represent his or her character qualities. This case highlights the metonymical connection between the OWNER and the CAR AS A STATUS MARKER.

One more aspect of the semantic reinterpretation in the examples above is connected with the correlation between the formal structure of the backronyms and their semantics. In the case of the German *bin maßlos wichtig* 'I'm extremely important', the semantics of the backronym is condensed in the syntactically elliptic phrase with the nominal predicate expressed by the first-person singular present form of the auxiliary verb *sein* and the adjective *wichtig* modified by the adverb *maßlos*. In the second expansion, *bin mordswichtig* 'I'm so damn important', the meaning is enclosed in an almost identical syntactically elliptic phrase consisting of the nominal predicate expressed by the first-person singular present form of the auxiliary verb *sein* and the adjective *wichtig*. However, the modifying function of the adverb *maßlos* is delegated to the prefixoid *mords-*. Originally a free morpheme meaning 'murder', *mords-* undergoes desemantization and begins to function as a semi-free morpheme with a connotative evaluative meaning of a higher degree of the quality expressed by the main word *wichtig*. Prefixoids differ from prefixes in that they not only constitute root morphemes, but equally preserve their generalized meaning (Степанова & Фляйшер 1984: 150-153; Kürschner 2008: 67-68). Such examples are not uncommon in German, for instance *Affenhitze* (*monkey+heat*) 'scorching heat' or *hundekalt* (*dog+cold*) 'freezing cold'.

Another important feature of backronyms is code-switching, which allows the speaker to swiftly change the register of his or her speech – from the formal / neutral to the informal. Constituting per se a form of language game, backronymy also serves as a powerful tool of changing the sociolinguistic status of a speaker. The more ironic,

familiar, or even vulgar such reinterpretation sounds, the more self-contented the speaker feels, breaking free of the stereotypes of the "omnipresent" and ever-intruding brand publicity world where money and valuables fetishize the power and status of their owners. As a result, the conceptual metaphor MONEY IS POWER, deeply rooted in our consciousness, becomes wittingly neglected by the speaker. From a psycholinguistic perspective, use of backronymy and similar language games serves as a speaker's tool to relieve the burden of the ubiquitous materialism-based measurability of oneself as well as of the surrounding world in order to overcome the socially imposed stigma suppressing human will and encroaching upon freedom of choice.

In a similar vein, PBs frequently highlight lack of prestige, for instance the aforementioned Swedish *sådan kan ofta döda atmosfären* 'such can often kill the atmosphere' for *Škoda* and the German *fährt in Autoklasse Trabant* 'belongs in the "Trabant" vehicle class' for *FIAT*. The adequate technical characteristics of a car are nowadays seen as a must-have; any car lacking these is considered to be a "misfit", whereas its manufacturer, often spending exorbitant sums of money on luxury television commercials, becomes stigmatized as a liar. Therefore, the conceptual metaphor actuated is PROMISES ARE A FRAUD. The German example with *Trabant* is even more telling, since it conveys additional extralinguistic information. *Trabant* is a well-known car brand, commercially produced in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The car had to satisfy the needs of the working class but still remained a symbol of an inexpensive yet technically unadvanced means of transportation, perfectly suiting the ideological slogans but poorly meeting average car quality standards. The implicit meaning of this backronym encloses the conceptual metaphor BIG POLITICAL SLOGANS ARE A BIG FRAUD, where the car brand *Trabant* becomes one of the elements of the Soviet communist ideology massively imposed on East Germans. Accordingly, the semantic range of these backronyms proves to be multilayered, immersing the recipient in the speaker's historical and cultural background. All the above proves that,

besides the intrinsic function of ludicity, backronymy equally serves as a powerful tool of semantic productivity.

The Danish *vel organiseret lort verden over* 'well-arranged shit world over' for *Volvo* also designates a car of poor quality. It is obvious that the negative connotation of this backronym is revealed by the utilization of a taboo word. Since the component *lort*, whether used as a simplex or as a part of a compound, is deemed totally unacceptable in standard language, the pejorative meaning of the whole backronym is made blatantly explicit. Generally speaking, negative emotions contribute greatly to the replenishment of colloquial lexicon (Materynska 2012: 161), since the expressiveness of derogatory or even downright obscene lexical units is driven by the speaker's urge to spontaneously respond to a situation in the most emphatic manner. Insufficient emotive charge of existing vocabulary proves an important factor in the formation of lexical and phraseological neologisms. As can be deduced from the evidence collected, all backronyms are nonce-formations. As such, these ad hoc units are structurally volatile and semantically variable, allowing for virtually random constituent substitution (for instance, component optionality in the German *Feuer / Fehler in allen Teilen* 'fire / faults in every part' for *FIAT*) and multiple interpretations (for instance, semantic versatility of evaluatively ambivalent backronyms) respectively.

5. Conclusions

The present findings confirm that the ambit of a PB has a binary nature, embracing an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent represented by a car brand being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. The key functions emanating from the definition of poreionymic backronymy include the semantically relevant ludicity, periphrasticity, and dysphemisticity as well as the structurally relevant redundancy.

The formation of poreionymic backronyms complies with one of the two transformational patterns, "original expansion phrase → acronym → resulting expansion phrase" or "non-acronym → pseudo-acronym → resulting expansion phrase", depending on whether the resulting unit expands an acronym or a pseudo-acronym. The closest periphrastic counterparts of backronymy are acrosticky and apronymy, which, nevertheless, are based on ontologically distinct patterns: "original expansion phrase → [implicit intermediary acronym] → resulting expansion phrase (→ explicit intermediary acronym)" and "original expansion phrase → ^{acronym/}resulting expansion phrase" respectively. In the meantime, there is ample evidence to claim that disabbreviation and recursive acronymy are nothing short of specific instances of backronymy.

The taxonomy of PBs proposed in the present article is premised on four approaches: genetic, graphic, structural, and semantic (axiological).

Genetically, PBs fall into two types: acronym-based, i.e. formed from shortenings constructed from the word-initial letters of a phrase and pronounced as a letter sequence or as an ordinary word, and non-acronym-based, i.e. stemming primarily from metonymic and metaphoric eponyms, and, to a lesser extent, from compounds, blend words, clippings, and borrowings. Graphically, PBs form two groups: graphically lucid and graphically obscure, depending on whether the conformity of the capitals in the (pseudo-)acronym to the initials in the expansion phrase is thorough or partial respectively. Structurally, distinction is made between complete substitution PBs and partial substitution PBs, with regard to the number of the lexical (or, occasionally, morphemic) elements replaced. Semantically, PBs are divided into evaluatively positive, negative, and ambivalent in compliance with the placement of the foregrounded characteristics on the collective axiological scale.

The results obtained yield conclusions about the cognitive semantic and sociolinguistic status of PBs as a powerful means of lexicon development.

Cognitively speaking, PBs result from the speaker's urge for lexical creativity and innovativeness. Following the fundamental principle of language economy, they reveal their unlimited capacity of storing information in a compressed yet multilayered explicit or implicit form. Semantic variability of PBs, based on the processes of metaphorization and metonymization, as well as their ad hoc character, make them an unfailing source of neologization, which is highly characteristic of present-day network communication and, thus, reflects the globalization and internationalization trends in today's society. Although the nonce word status of many of the units under investigation does not allow for approaching them as institutionalized or standardized, backronymy successfully exploits all the conventional matrices of lexicon replenishment as well as introduces new ones (e.g., novel conceptual metaphors), reflecting the speaker's demand for verbal ludicity.

The sociolinguistic status of PBs is connected with code switching from neutral to informal spoken language, which, in its turn, implies that the distinctions between functional language registers can be eliminated in accordance with the speaker's pragmatic intentions. Being both a linguistic and an extralinguistic source of information, backronyms equally serve as repositories of national cultural and historical legacies. Moreover, the Roman alphabet-based graphic representation of PBs expands the boundaries of the application of the universal semiotic code, contributing to its unification in a wide range of languages from diverse families. As a result, PBs may be rightfully treated as a potentially efficient tool of brand marketing and anti-marketing worldwide.

To sum up, the present paper is an attempt to enhance our understanding of backronymy as an important tool of language ludicity from a general linguistics

perspective. Future contrastive studies of the phenomenon should identify its isomorphic and allomorphic features across diverse languages and language groups. In addition, a pragmalinguistic context-based approach aimed at investigating the functional aspect of backronyms might prove an important area for further research.

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Abbreviations linking to empirical data sources

AN – <http://www.anyksta.lt.anyksta.hostingas.lt/naujienos/naujienos/63044-automobili-registrav-s-vyras-sulauke-itarim#!kmt-start=10>

BA – [https://banga.tv3.lt/lt/2forum.showPosts/832664.41.88-=\(16542980](https://banga.tv3.lt/lt/2forum.showPosts/832664.41.88-=(16542980)

BM – <https://www.bmwkraftur.is/spjall/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=31760&start=0>

BO – <https://boxerville.se/forum/viewtopic.php?id=9018>

CA – <https://www.carthrottle.com/post/12-car-acronyms-given-alternative-meanings/?comments>

CE – https://www.cellerscene.de/kk_abk.htm

CI – <http://www.city-data.com/forum/automotive/817298-auto-make-acronyms.html>

CO – <http://www.careofcars.com/145/funny-car-acronym-for-each-brand/>

CR – <https://crfsonly.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=16857>

DI – <https://digilander.libero.it/OcchiVerdiSito/Barzellette/Frammenti.html>

DS – <https://www.dse.nl/~gjlammers/Humorbox/Automerkwaardigheden.html>

EV – <http://evangeline-1234.tripod.com/smf/id33.html>

GA – <https://www.garaget.org/forum/viewtopic.php?id=30492>

GY – https://www.gyakorikerdese.hu/felnott-parkapcsolatok__tarskeresesi-problema__7218828-ferfikent-muszaj-elfogadnom-hogy-csak-nalam-rosszabb-kategoriaju-parom-lehetne__oldal-1

HE – https://www.hestegalleri.dk/forum/off-topic/1321836-sjove_forkortelser__

HO – <https://howlingpixel.com/i-lb/Backronym>

JA – <https://jalopnik.com/the-definitive-guide-to-derogatory-auto-acronyms-5879789>

MB – <https://mbclub.is/spjallid/3/3968>

ME – <http://www.mestmotor.se/bilsnack/forum/showthread.php?5132-Kul-om-bil-namn&s=fbd123866e2697ca7ad3f39f3edee865>

NO – <https://nonsa.pl/wiki/S%C5%82ownik:BMW>

PE – <https://www.pieldetoro.net/foro/index.php?threads/que-significan-las-siglas-de-las-marcas-de-coches.52135/>

PI – https://pikabu.ru/story/rasshifrovki_abbreviatur_mashin_2284410

PS – <https://www.pistonheads.com/gassing/topic.asp?h=0&f=226&t=244593&i=20>

QU – <https://www.quizz.biz/quizz-187125.html>

RC – <http://rc10.fi/index.php?topic=5353.90>

RI – http://www.rijmgein.nl/taalhumor/grappige_afkortingen.html

SU – <https://www.super.kg/kabar/news/200169/>

TU – <http://www.tuning.bg/forums/index.php?/topic/60265-%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%B1%D1%8A%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5/>


TW – <http://www.tweak.dk/forum/board5-off-topic/67077-auto-betegnelser/>

VG – <https://vgd.no/forbruker/bil/tema/846956/tittel/bilmerkenes-forkortelser/innlegg/11141387/>


WA – <https://www.wattpad.com/133888788-witze-spr%C3%BCche-verarschte-lolige-abk%C3%BCrzungen>

ZK – <http://zkan.com.ua/sho/jaki-smishni-rozshifrovki-abbreviatur-vi-znaete.html>

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Résumé

The present paper examines the nature, formation patterns, types, and correlations of poreionymic backronyms (PBs) on both theoretical and empirical planes. A PB is treated as an expansion assigned to a pseudo-acronym or an alternative expansion assigned to an acronym, with the original referent represented by a car brand being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. Since backronyms are likely to be confused with other linguistic phenomena, namely acrostics, apronyms, disabbreviations, and recursive acronyms, the differences between these notions are clarified in the article. It is established that backronymy complies with two transformational patterns, "original

expansion phrase → acronym → resulting expansion phrase" or "non-acronym → pseudo-acronym → resulting expansion phrase", depending on whether the resulting unit expands an acronym or a pseudo-acronym. The closest periphrastic counterparts of backronymy are acrosticky and apronymy, which, nevertheless, are based on ontologically distinct patterns: "original expansion phrase → [implicit intermediary acronym] → resulting expansion phrase (→ explicit intermediary acronym)" and "original expansion phrase → ^{acronym}/_{resulting expansion phrase}" respectively. In the meantime, disabbreviation and recursive acronymy prove to be specific instances of backronymy. The database of the research presents a selection of 317 items from car users' and amateur linguists' Internet forums and humour compilations. The proposed taxonomy of PBs allows concluding that: genetically, PBs fall into acronym- and non-acronym-based; graphically, they consist of graphically lucid and obscure PBs; structurally, distinction is made between complete and partial substitution PBs; semantically, PBs are divided into evaluatively positive, negative, and ambivalent. Semantic variability of PBs, based on the processes of metaphorization and metonymization, as well as their ad hoc character makes them a rich source of lexicon expansion.

Key words: backronym, poreionym (car brand name), acronym, non-acronym, acrostic, apronym, disabbreviation, recursive acronym, language game.

Article was received by the editorial board 28.07.2020.

Reviewed 01.09.2020. and 01.09.2020.

Similarity Index 5%