

# Abbreviations in Maritime English

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## Abstract

Aiming at the phenomena that more and more abbreviations occur in maritime English correspondences, the composing laws of the abbreviations in maritime English correspondence are analyzed, and the correct methods to answer the abbreviations are pointed out, and the translation method of abbreviations are summarized in this article, and the research results are practically significant for the reading, teaching, and scientific research of maritime English.

**Keywords:** Maritime English correspondence, Abbreviations, Use, Translation

Maritime English correspondence is the main foreign contact way for the shipping industry, and it is the important tool to develop the shipping industry and other businesses. With the development of the shipping industry of China and the frequent communication among countries, the interior labor division in the shipping enterprise is more and more sophisticated, and the communication content increases largely, and to express abundant content by simple language, more and more maritime English abbreviations are introduced in the daily communication among shipping enterprises.

Brevity and definitude are basic rules in the development of language and words, and when expressing complex meanings and much information, proper abbreviations could effectively save the time of writing, reading, and talking. In forms, the maritime English correspondence abbreviations (here in after referred to as abbreviations) like as common English words, but they can concisely and comprehensively express the information in the shipping industry, and effectively simplify the communication content without misunderstandings, and because of strong professional property, and the using frequency ascends increasingly, and part of abbreviations have been daily words. According to uncompleted statistics, at present, almost every piece of shipping information, sailing date, and ship deal would include many abbreviations, and many abbreviations such as “FIO”, “WWDSHIC”, and “NOR” could be found in each sequence of voyages of the bulk freighter, but these abbreviations could not be checked in common English dictionaries. Therefore, the employees in the shipping industry have to grasp and learn relative abbreviations to understand the others’ real meanings, and only in this way, the employees could keep effective communication with relative parties. The employees in the shipping industry have to grasp the composing methods, the matters needing attention, the translation methods of the abbreviations to ensure the correct using of abbreviations.

## 1. Composing methods of abbreviations

Abbreviations are the new words by using certain word-formation means to create and abbreviate single word, phrase, or short verses according to certain rules, and in maritime English correspondence, there are following methods to compose the abbreviations.

### 1.1 Initial abbreviating

The common abbreviating method in the maritime English correspondence is to compose some phrases and special terms by two or above two individual characters, and combine the first characters of the substantives (sometimes including function words) composing the phrase or special term to compose one new world. For example,

ETA = Estimate time of arrive;

TST = Top side Tank;

ASAP = As Soon As possible;

DOP = Drop Of Pilot

### 1.2 Shortening abbreviating

The shortening abbreviating method is to process one part of the original word from the completed word, and abbreviate one part of characters to compose the new word, and its composing methods include

(1) Taking the former part of one word. For example:

ROAD = Roadstead

ESTI = Estimate

ABBR = Abbreviation

MEMO = Memorandum

(2) Keeping the first character and the last character of some separate words. For example:

YD = Yard

YR = Your

WL = Will

HR = Hour

(3) Taking the first part of the compound word. For example:

CABLE = cable television

MICRO = micro computer

MOBILE = mobile phone

POST = post code

(4) Taking the first character of the first word and the last part of the second word. For example:

P/STN = Pilot Station

O/FRT = Ocean Freight

B/DOWN = Breakdown

F/DFT = Fore Draught

(5) In the fixed term composed by multiple words, taking the front parts of several special words. For example:

COLREGS = Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (taking the front three characters from “Collision” and “Regulations”);

MARPOL = The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (taking the front three characters from “Marine” and “Pollution”);

MERSAR = Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual (taking characters from “Merchant” and “Search and Rescue”);

BALTIME = Baltic and International Maritime Conference Standard form of Timecharter (taking characters from “Baltic” and “Timecharter”).

### *1.3 Abbreviating according to the pronunciation of word*

(1) Keeping the first character of the first syllable and the second syllable (or the consonant same with the pronunciation of the second syllable), i.e. keeping the front characters of some separate words. For example:

ADV = Advise

DOC = Document

COMM = Commission

(2) Keeping the first syllable and all word pronunciation or important consonant behind the first syllable. For example:

ALRDY = Already

RECV D = Received

UNQT = Unquote

DESTN = Destination

(3) Keeping word pronunciation, i.e. keeping the important word pronunciation or all word pronunciations, but the first character of the first syllable should be kept whether it is the consonant or the vowel, i.e. in the principle that others would misunderstand the meaning, the vowel characters should be abbreviated as possibly. For example:

RPT = Repeat

MGR = Manager

ACPT = Accept

CNTR = Container

(4) For the words with multiple syllables, using the apostrophe to replace the abbreviated characters. For example:

ADT'L = Additional

D'CULT = Difficult

O'SEAS = Overseas

(5) For those words with multiple syllables with same first character and same last character, when abbreviating characters, more consonant characters should be kept for the distinguishing. For example:

QLTY = Quality

QNTY = quantity

ATTN = Attention

(6) Using similar pronunciation for abbreviating. For example:

V = we

U = you

N = and

OZ = ounce

NITE = night

(7) Keeping the first syllable and the second syllable. For example:

AVE = Avenue

AUTO = Automobile

PARA = Paragraph

(8) Keeping the first syllable and the second syllable and the first consonant character of the third syllable. For example:

APPROX = Approximate

IMMED = Immediate

IRRESP = Irrespective

ORGAN = Organization

(9) Keeping the whole of the last syllable, and taking the important consonant or all consonant characters of other syllables (Noting: when the accent is at the last syllable, this method is often used). For example:

ADRESEE = Addressee

GTEE = Guarantee

MTIME = Meantime

YDAY = Yesterday

#### *1.4 Special abbreviating methods*

(1) Simplifying the end of some words. For example:

ARRIVG = Arriving (Simplifying "ing" by G)

WORKD = Worked (Simplifying "ed" by D)

SHIPT = Shipment (Simplifying "ment" by T)

SECTN = Section (Simplifying "-ion" by N)

(2) Using Arabic numerals to replace the syllables with same pronunciation. For example:

B4 = Before

In2 = Into

There4 = Therefore

(3) Using X or Z to replace the word head or the word end of some words. For example:

XMAS = Christmas

PAX = Passenger

FAX = Facsimile

BIZ = Business

## 2. How to answer more and more abbreviations

To pursue brevity and definitude is the necessary tendency of the language development, and when more and more abbreviations are extensively used in the shipping industry, to grasp and understand the composing and use of usual abbreviations is the necessary guarantee to ensure the effective communication. In the daily works, the knowledge about abbreviations should be accumulated intentionally, and more abbreviations should be used as possibly. When meeting with unknown abbreviations, employees in the shipping industry should unhesitatingly consult to addressers, until the other explain the word clearly, avoiding suspecting and estimations without any references.

Though the composing of abbreviations has not fixed rule, but every new abbreviation has the process to be cognized and accustomed by the industry, so it should be avoided to create new abbreviation by oneself. When communicating with the others out of the shipping industry, those abbreviations which may induce misunderstandings and incomprehension should be added full name for correct understandings. At the same time, same one abbreviation may denote different meanings at different places (for example, AF may be "Air freight", "As Follow", or "Advance Freight", and its concrete meaning should be confirmed according to the context), so the real meaning of the abbreviation should be correctly understood according to the context when reading.

## 3. Translation of abbreviations

The time that every abbreviation occurs is not same, and the identification and using frequencies of these abbreviations are not same, and the translations should be different aiming at different abbreviations.

### 3.1 Free translation

Free translation means to translate according to the practical meaning of the words before they are abbreviated, and the Chinese translation should keep consistent with English meaning. Free translation could not only express the original meaning better, but also accord with Chinese habit, and most abbreviations could be translated by the free translation method, for example, WWD is the abbreviation of "Weather working day", and it should be translated as "working in the sunny day", keeping constant with English meaning.

### 3.2 Zero translation

The zero translation means to copy the abbreviation to the Chinese according to the original expression without any translation. With the further development of Chinese and west cultures and the universal enhancement of English in China, more and more English expressions begin to enter into Chinese, and more abbreviations have been cognized and used widely because of high using frequency, and they could be understood and accepted without translation, so in the translation, these abbreviations need not translation. For example, VCD is the abbreviation of "Video Compact Disc", and it has been accepted in China, and if it is translated by "Video Compact Disc", people will not know what it means. The "ARPA" in "ARPA Radar" is the abbreviation of "Automatic Radar Plotting Aid", and because "ARPA" has been know by Chinese people, so the zero translation should be adopted.

Because more and more English expressions have been accepted and adopted in Chinese, the applicability of the zero translation is wider and wider.

### 3.3 Transliteration

Transliteration means to translate according to the English pronunciation of the abbreviation, i.e. find corresponding Chinese expression according to the pronunciation of the new abbreviated English word. Though transliteration is simple and feasible to be accepted, but it only applies to those abbreviations which are identified extensively. Especially, the Chinese translated by the transliteration method could not express real meaning, so it could not often be understood by the persons out of the industry. For example, "GENCON Contract" is translated as "JINKANG Contract", and those persons without shipping knowledge could not associate "GENCON" with "Shipping by chartering".

## 4. Conclusions

Continually developing maritime English abbreviations bring new reading and writing rules, new word-building methods, new using methods, which would largely influence the communication in the interiors of the shipping industry. Therefore, only by grasping the basic word-building methods and the real meanings of the abbreviations, the abbreviations could be correctly applied, and some unnecessary mistakes could be reduced and avoided, so the

employees' eligibility ability in the shipping industry of China could be comprehensively enhanced, and the target of building China as the strong shipping country can be soon realized.

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