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Visser, W.

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Acronyms in Modern West Frisian

Willem Visser
Fryske Akademy, Ljouwert
Frysk Ynstitút, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Acronyms – let alone acronyms in Modern West Frisian – have not received much attention, neither in the morphological nor in the phonological literature.¹ Most of the time they are named 'just in passing'. The aim of this paper is to show that they have some interesting linguistic properties, which deserve a proper treatment. First of all, there is an intimate connection between acronyms and literacy, which is absent for other linguistic entities; this is the topic of section 1. Acronyms function as a word, but they have the meaning associated with a syntactic constituent; the peculiarities of their morphological status are treated in section 2. There are two types of acronym, a letter-sounding and a letter-naming one, both of which have a different phonological status; this is what section 3 is devoted to. Section 4, finally, presents a proposal for the formation of acronyms. The paper ends with some concluding remarks (section 5).

1. Acronyms and literacy

Acronyms are formed from the initial letters of the words which make up a syntactic constituent or a compound. They, thus, have their origin in written language. The implication of this is that they function – and are also favoured – "in modern literate societies" (Kreidler (2000:956)). This has repercussions for acronyms in a minority language like Modern West Frisian (from now on: Frisian), the speakers of which have a much lower degree of literacy in their language than speakers of, for instance, Dutch and German have in theirs. The language most speakers of Frisian use for writing is Dutch. Some 30% of them are able to write Frisian, from very well to reasonably well (Fryske Taalatlas 2011, p. 9), but not all of them do so regularly and neither at all levels of communication.

More importantly, there is a "great burgeoning of technical vocabulary in every phase of modern life" and an "increasing complexity of political administration" (Kreidler (2000:959)). And since the Province

¹ I would like to thank Geert Booij for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

of Fryslân is an integral part of The Netherlands, the Frisian speakers fall within the scope of and are acquainted with the Dutch political and juridical system, with its hundreds of acronyms. These are not rephrased in Frisian, but are taken over as such, be it that they undergo adaptations to the phonological system of Frisian (see § 3.2 below). As a matter of fact, thus, most acronyms in Frisian are loans from Dutch.² This does not imply that Frisian cannot and does not develop acronyms of its own. It can and it does, but at a much more modest and restricted level than does Dutch.

2. The morphological status of acronyms

Though an acronym is made up of the initial letters of a series of words which constitute a syntactic constituent or a compound,³ it functions as a linguistic unit in its own right. First, as to many acronyms, the great majority of the speakers do not know which words their letters stand for, but they do know which concept they denote. So, many people do not know what underlies acronyms like *dvd* and *sms*, but they know very well what kind of entity they refer to. Second, acronyms may be the base for word formation processes, which is far more common for single lexical units than for constituents as a whole. Take the acronyms *PIN* 'Personal Identification Number' and *FNP* 'Frisian National Party'⁴, which show up in compounds – like *PIN-pas* 'debit card', *PIN-automaat* 'money dispenser', *FNP-lid* 'member of the FNP', and *FNP-bestjoer* 'board of the FNP' – and which undergo derivation – as with *FNP'er* 'member of the FNP; FNP politician' and *pinne* 'to pay with a debit card; to obtain (money) from a dispenser (with a debit card)'⁵. And take the Dutch acronym *SOA*, which

² Loanwords from other languages, like French and English, also enter Frisian through the mediation of Dutch.

³ In most cases, an acronym concentrates on the content words of the constituent, whereas the function words are omitted. This, in turn, may lead to a somewhat 'unnatural', formulaic use of the constituent. Take *de Wet op de maatschappelijke ondersteuning* or *de Belasting op de Toegevoegde Waarde*, the acronyms of which are *de Wmo* and *de BTW*, which are then likely to be (re)phrased as *de Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning* and *de Belasting Toegevoegde Waarde*, so without the functional elements *op de*.

⁴ An overview of the acronyms mentioned in this paper is provided in Appendix B.

⁵ In the unmarked case, Frisian conversion verbs belong to the second weak conjugation class, with the infinitive ending in *-je*. The fact that *pinne* is a verb of the first weak class, with the infinitive ending in *-e*, is an indication that it is likely to be a Dutch loanword.

stands for *Sexueel Overdraagbare Aandoening* 'Sexually Transmissible Disease', as another example. The word *aandoening* 'disorder' is pluralised with *-en*, as are all words ending in the suffix *-ing*: *aandoeningen* 'disorders'. Words, especially loanwords, ending in a vowel are normally pluralised with *-s*, so *SOA* has the plural form *SOA's* (and not *SOA'en*). Also, the diminutive of *aandoening* is *aandoeninkje*, whereas that of *SOA* is *SOA'tje*, with the suffix *-tje*, as with vowel-final words in general. All this testifies to the status of an acronym as an independent word.⁶

One may wonder whether, like most simplex words, acronyms can be considered (free) morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit with an independent meaning (and/or a grammatical function), that is, a morpheme is the smallest unit of form and meaning (between which there is an arbitrary, conventional relation). Now, the letters of the alphabet do not have a lexical-conceptual meaning of their own, they just represent a position in a ranking. The meaning of an acronym, therefore, is not directly associated with the string of letters it consists of, but with the meaning of the constituent or compound which this string is an orthographic abbreviation of. Thus, be it in an indirect way, acronyms show a non-arbitrary relation between form and meaning or, put differently, they have a compositional meaning. This is a strong indication that they count as complex forms.

If the origin of an acronym is no longer part of the speakers' knowledge of the world, the acronym becomes indistinguishable from a simplex word. The words *laser* and *radar* – which actually are (letter-sounding) acronyms – are well-known examples. They also show the arbitrary relation between form and meaning which is typical of simplex words. Such acronyms, then, have become a 'smallest linguistic unit with an independent meaning', i.e., they have turned into genuine free morphemes.

3. The phonological status and behaviour of acronyms

The aim of this section is to show that, in order to account for the phonological behaviour of acronyms, the letters of the alphabet must be assigned two phonological forms, a phonemic one and a full one. These are

⁶ An acronym may have a definite article which differs from that of the final noun of the nominal constituent which it abbreviates. A case in point is *de LAB*, the full form of which was *het Leeuwarder Auto Bedrijf* (*bedrijf* is a neuter noun, whereas the article *de* is associated with common gender). This is also indicative of the independent morphological status of acronyms.

put to use in the formation of letter-sounding and letter-naming acronyms, respectively. An acronym belongs to one of these categories, depending on whether or not the series of vowel and consonant representing letters which it consists of translates into (a series of) well-formed syllables. Acronyms are shown to have two stress patterns, which link up with their status as a phonological word or as a phonological phrase.

This section is organised as follows. It sets out with the role played by the alphabet and the phonological value of its letters in the spelling system (subsection 3.1). Subsection 3.2 is devoted to the phonological adaptation of Dutch loan acronyms in Frisian. The distinction between letter-naming and letter-sounding acronyms is the topic of subsection 3.3, whereas subsection 3.4 shows how the difference between these two types is also manifested by their different stress patterns.

3.1 The role of the alphabetic spelling system in acronyms

An acronym is formed from the initial letters of words, so its phonological behaviour is intimately connected with the phonological properties of the letters of the alphabet.⁷ The Frisian alphabet consists of the following letters, with the phonological representations indicated⁸:

(1) the letters of the Frisian alphabet and their phonological representation

<i>letter</i>	<i>phonemic form</i>	<i>full form</i>
a	/a/	/a:/
b	/b/	/be:/
c	/s/	/se:/
d	/d/	/de:/
e ⁹	/ɪ/	/e:/
	/ɛ/	/e:/
f	/f/	/ɛf/

⁷ Most acronyms are written in capital letters, which sets them apart from 'normal' words.

⁸ See appendix A for a comparison of the full forms in (1) with those in Halbertsma (1833).

⁹ The phonemic form of <e> can be both /ɪ/ and /ɛ/. The full form, however, is /e:/. The latter is the genuine long counterpart of /ɪ/. /ɛ/ has the long counterpart /ɛ:/, but the latter does not occur in word-final position, save in some interjections.

g	/g/	/ge:/
h	/h/	/ha:/
i/y	/i/	/i/
j	/j/	/je:/
k	/k/	/ka:/
l	/l/	/ɛl/
m	/m/	/ɛm/
n	/n/	/ɛn/
o ¹⁰	/o/	/o:/
	/ɔ/	/o:/
p	/p/	/pe:/
q		/ky/
r	/r/	/ɛr/
s	/s/	/ɛs/
t	/t/	/te:/
u	/y/	/y/
û	/u/	/u/
v	/v/	/ve:/
	/f/	/fe:/
w	/v/	/ve:/
x		/ɛks/
ij	/ɛi/	/ɛi/
z	/z/	/zɛt/
	/s/	/ɛs/

There are 'letter-sounding' (orthoepic) and 'letter-naming' (alphabetic) acronyms (Kreidler (2000:957)).¹¹ The former are pronounced as one word, the latter as a series of separate letters. In letter-sounding acronyms, where the letters are part of one word, the phonemic form of the letters is employed. In letter-naming acronyms, on the other hand, the letters stand on their own, that is, they function as separate phonological words. That is why the letters of the alphabet are assigned two representations in (1): a) a phonemic form, to be used, among other things, in letter-sounding acronyms; b) a full form for the use as an independent phonological word, as in letter-naming acronyms.

¹⁰ The phonemic form of <o> can be both /o/ and /ɔ/. The full form, however, is /o:/. The latter is the genuine long counterpart of /o/. /ɔ/ has the long counterpart /ɔ:/, which – like /ɛ:/ – does not occur in word-final position, again with the exception of some interjections.

¹¹ A point to which I will return in §3.3 below.

A phonological word must minimally contain a (full) vowel. At first sight, this seems to cause no problems for the vowel representing letters. For the consonant representing ones, on the other hand, it implies that, in order for them to be able to function as a word, they are in need of 'vowel support', as appears from the full forms of these letters in (1). If a consonant denoting letter is accompanied by a vowel on its right-hand side, the vowel in question is invariably long, in line with the fact that a word-final vowel in Frisian is long in the unmarked case. This is not without consequences for the vowel representing letters.¹² If an acronym ends in such a letter, the latter is realised as long, also when it abbreviates a short vowel. Some examples are given in (2):

(2) *examples of acronyms the final vowel of which abbreviates a short vowel*

FA	/ɛf a:/	Fryske [a]kademy
WMO	/ve: ɛm o:/	Wet maatschappelijke [o]ndersteuning
PvdA	/pe: fe: de: a:/	Partij van de [a]rbeid
NNO	/ɛn ɛn o:/	Noord Nederlands [ɔ]rkest

The Frisian (and Dutch) spelling system represents a diphthong as a digraph, only the first member of which becomes part of an acronym. As the examples in (3) make clear, this vowel denoting letter is realised as a long vowel in final position:

(3) *examples of acronyms the final vowels of which abbreviate the first member of diphthong representing digraphs*

AJO	[a:jo:]	A. J. [o.ɔ]singa
LABO	[la:bo:]	Leeuwarder A uto B us O nderneming

¹² This seems to be contradicted by <i/y> [i], <q> [ky], and <u> [y], which, on the face of it, end in a short vowel. There are, however, various kinds of evidence that the close vowels /i,y,u/, though phonetically short, behave as long vowels phonologically. Moreover, their long counterparts, /i:,y:,u:/, do not occur in word-final position.

In Frisian orthography, the vowels representing letters, with the exception of <i/y>, can be extended with diacritics: <â,é,ê,ô,ú,û>; save <y> and <u>, they can also be doubled, in order to represent a long vowel (in a closed syllable): <aa,ee,ii,oo>. Since these options are never employed in acronyms – with the exception of /<û> –, they are left out of consideration here.

Long vowels in closed syllables are also represented as digraphs, and here as well only the first member becomes part of an acronym. This vowel representing letter is realised as short, provided it is not in final position, see (4):

(4) *example of a short vowel in a letter-sounding acronym, representing the first member of a long vowel representing digraph*

NOF [nɔf] Noord-**O**ost-Friesche autobusonderneming

In the Dutch spelling system, some digraphs represent a single phoneme. Examples are <oe> and <ng>, which stand for /u/ and /ŋ/, respectively. When preceding <r>, <oe> represents a considerably longer and slightly diphthongised /u/. Such digraphs are also interpreted as single phonemes in acronyms, where each letter is the abbreviation of an independent word, in which it has its non-combinatorial value. Examples are given in (5):

(5) *examples of the interpretation of letter combinations as single phonemes in letter-sounding acronyms*

OER [u.ɔr] [o]nderwijs en [ɛ]xamen Regeling
 ING [ɪŋ] Internationale [n]ederlanden [ʏ]roep

In conclusion, what counts in acronyms is the phonological value of the letter or the letter combination as part of the alphabetical spelling system, not as part of the words which are abbreviated. The letters which make up an acronym, thus, act as phonological entities in their own right. This, then, also holds for the acronym as a whole.

3.2 *The adaptation of Dutch loan acronyms in Frisian*

As noted in §1 above, the great majority of Dutch acronyms are taken over in Frisian, where they are adapted to the Frisian phonological system, some examples of which are provided and explained in (6):

(6) *examples of adapted letter-naming loan acronyms from Dutch*

-	<i>acronym</i>	<i>Dutch form</i>	<i>Frisian adaptation</i>
	ING	/i ɛn ɣe:/	[i ɛŋ ge:]
	SGP	/ɛs ɣe: pe:/	[ɛz ge: pe:]
	AZG	/a: zɛt ɣe:/	[a: sɛd ge:]

The (capital) letter <G>, which represents the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ in Dutch, is in word-initial position, where it matches the voiced velar plosive [g] in Frisian.

-	<i>acronym</i>	<i>Dutch form</i>	<i>Frisian adaptation</i>
	VW	/ve: ve:/	[fe: ve:]
	AZG	/a: zɛt ɣe:/	[a: sɛd ge:]

Voiced labiodental and alveolar fricatives do not occur in word-initial position in Frisian, so /v/ and /z/ are adapted to [f] and [s], respectively.¹³

3.3 *Letter-naming and letter-sounding acronyms*

The letters making up a letter-naming acronym function as independent phonological words. In Frisian, the phonological processes of *Regressive Place Assimilation* and *Regressive Voice Assimilation* apply at the boundaries of phonological words, so they are expected to operate within the bounds of letter-naming acronyms. This is borne out by the facts, as exemplified in (7):

¹³ The approximant [v] does not occur in that position either, which is why it is adapted as well (to [v]).

(7) examples of the operation of word boundary phonological processes within letter-naming acronyms

a. *Regressive Place Assimilation*

<i>acronym</i>	<i>underlying representation</i>	<i>phonetic form</i>
FNP	/ɛf ɛn pe:/	[ɛv ɛm pe:]
ING	/i ɛn ge:/	[i jɛŋ ge:] ¹⁴

b. *Regressive Voice Assimilation*

<i>acronym</i>	<i>underlying representation</i>	<i>phonetic form</i>
FNP	/ɛf ɛn pe:/	[ɛv ɛm pe:]
FA	/ɛf a:/	[ɛv a:]
FD	/ɛf de:/	[ɛv de:]
SGP	/ɛs ge: pe:/	[ɛz ge: pe:]
SOA	/ɛs o: a:/	[ɛz o: a:]
AZG	/a: sɛt ge:/	[a: sɛd ge:]

Though they are not restricted to operating at word boundaries, *Vowel Nasalisation* and *Homorganic Glide Insertion* operate in acronyms as well, examples of which are given in (8):

(8) examples of the operation of other phonological processes within acronyms

a. *Vowel Nasalisation*¹⁵

<i>acronym</i>	<i>underlying representation</i>	<i>phonetic form</i>
G&W ¹⁶	/ge: ɛn ve:/	[ge: ẽ ve:]

¹⁴ The realisation of <G> as [g] paves the way for this kind of assimilation, which is induced by a plosive.

¹⁵ The acronym *ANS* is never realised with a nasal vowel (as [ã]), but only with an oral one (as [an's]). This may be explained as a simple case of Dutch interference. But there may be more to it. In Frisian, a vowel preceding the tautomorphic sequence *-ns/* is always long. For *ANS* this would result in the pronunciation [ã:s], which is likely to be felt as too remote from <ANS>.

¹⁶ <&> is not a letter of the alphabet. It denotes the coordinating conjunction *en* /ɛn/ 'and', which receives its normal pronunciation.

ANWB	/a: ɛn ve: be:/	[a: ẽ ve: be:]
NWO	/ɛn ve: o:/	[ẽ ve: o:]

b. *Homorganic Glide Insertion*

<i>acronym</i>	<i>underlying representation</i>	<i>phonetic form</i>
DS	/de: ɛs/	[de: jɛs]
ING	/i ɛn ɣe:/	[i jɛŋ ɣe:]
SOA	/ɛs o: a:/	[ɛz o: wa:]
G&W	/ɣe: ɛn ve:/	[ɣe: jẽ ve:]
WMO	/ve: ɛm o:/	[ve: jɛm o:]
PvdA	/pe: fe: de: a:/	[pe: fe: de: ja:]
NOS	/ɛn o: ɛs/	[ɛn o: wɛs]
NWO	/ɛn ve: o:/	[ẽ ve: jo:]

3.4 *The stress pattern of acronyms*

Letter-sounding acronyms have the stress pattern of simplex words; see the disyllabic examples in (9), in which one syllable bears stress, whereas the other one remains unstressed:

(9) *examples of the stress pattern of disyllabic letter-sounding acronyms*

Afûk	['a:fuk]
AVRO	['a:vro:]
HAVO	['ha:vo:]
VARA	['fa:ra:]

These are trochees, which is the unmarked foot type in Frisian.

Letter-naming acronyms, on the other hand, have phrasal stress, with each word bearing secondary stress, while primary stress is invariably on the final one, as the examples in (10) illustrate:

(10) *examples of the stress pattern of letter-naming acronyms*

ANWB	[, ʔa: ʔẽ ve: 'be:]
DS	[, de: 'jɛs]
FA	[, ʔɛv 'a:]
FD	[, ʔɛv 'de:]

FNP	[,ʔɛv ʔɛm 'pe:]
G&W	[,ge: jɛ̃ 've:]
ING	[,ʔi jɛŋ 'ge:]
NOS	[,ɛn ʔo: 'wɛs]
NWO	[,ʔɛ̃ ve: 'jo:]
PvdA	[,pe: fe: de: 'ja:]
SGP	[,ʔɛz ge: 'pe:]
SOA	[,ʔɛz ʔo: 'wa:]
WMO	[,ve: jɛm 'ʔo:]

The phonological status of an acronym – a word or a phrase – is reflected in its stress pattern.¹⁷

4. The formation of acronyms: a proposal

As noted in subsection 3.3 above, there are letter-naming (alphabetic) and letter-sounding (orthoepic) acronyms, which are pronounced as a series of separate letters and as one word, respectively (Kreidler (2000:957)). As to their linguistic perception, "the alphabetic acronym is recognized as an abbreviation; the orthoepic acronym may be taken as a simple name" (Kreidler (2000:958)).

In order for an acronym to be realised in a letter-sounding way, two conditions must be met. First, it must contain at least one letter representing a full vowel and, second, the vowels and consonants represented by its letters must be arranged in such a way that they allow for an exhaustive parsing as one or more syllables. Otherwise, the acronym cannot but be pronounced in a letter-naming way.

For the formation of acronyms from (syntactic) constituents – which is a productive process – we may envisage the following scenario, which consists of a number of ordered instructions:

¹⁷ The acronym of *Evangelische Omroep*, *EO*, is realised as [,ʔe: 'jo:] (the digraph <eo> in Frisian orthography denotes the centring diphthongs /øə/, provided it is followed by /n/, as in *sneon* /snøən/ 'saturday'). Those belonging to the inner circles of the *EO*, however, realise the acronym as [ʔe: 'jo:], so with a deviant, anti-phrasal stress pattern, which immediately strikes one's ears.

(11) *a possible scenario for the formation of acronyms from constituents*

A: turning the constituent into a word:

- a) take the orthographic form of the constituent
- b) select the initial letters of the content words which make up this constituent and gather them in a string
- c) assign this string the word class status which links up with the syntactic status of the constituent

B1: assigning the string of letters a phonological form

- a) assign each of the letters of this string its phonemic form
- b) assign prosodic structure to this string: 1) divide it into syllables and 2) arrange these syllables into a phonological word
- c) assign stress to this word in accordance with the principles of word stress assignment holding for the language in question

If B1 fails, then turn to B2:

B2: assigning the string of letters a phonological form

- a) assign each of the letters of this string its full form
- b) assign prosodic structure to this string: 1) assign each of these full forms the status of a phonological word and 2) arrange these phonological words into a phonological phrase
- c) assign stress to this phrase in accordance with the principles of phrasal stress assignment holding for the language in question

What (11) implies is a secondary word formation process. The phrasal constituent is formed in accordance with the conditions holding for the language in question, after which the full orthographic form of this constituent is 'acronymised'. This results in a new and completely different phonological structure, whereas the meaning of the constituent remains intact.

According to the above scenario, there cannot be a mixing up of the letter-sounding and the latter-naming realisation of acronyms or, put differently, there is a categorical distinction between these two. In essence, this seems to be correct. Take, for example, *BKO* and *NNO*, which are realised in a letter-naming way, as [be: ka: ?o:] and [ʔɛn ʔɛn ?o:],

respectively, whereas from a phonological point of view *[be: ko:] and *[ɛn no:] – with a letter-naming first and a letter-sounding second part – would also be fine.

On the strength of this scenario, then, acronyms like those in (12a) are realised in a letter-sounding way – that is, as one word – whereas the ones exemplified in (12b) cannot but be realised in a letter-naming way:

(12) *examples of the realisation of acronyms on the strength of scenario (11)*

a. *in a letter-sounding way*¹⁸

Afûk: ((ʔa:)_σ(fuk)_σ)_ω
 AVRO: ((ʔa:)_σ(vro:)_σ)_ω
 HAVO: (('ha:)_σ(vo:)_σ)_ω
 VARA: (('fa:)_σ(ra:)_σ)_ω

b. *in a letter-naming way*

AZG: (((, ʔa:)_σ)_ω((, sɛd)_σ)_ω(('gɛ:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 DS: (((, de:)_σ)_ω(('jɛs)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 FD: (((, ʔɛv)_σ)_ω(('de:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 FNP: (((, ʔɛv)_σ)_ω((, ʔɛm)_σ)_ω(('pe:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 LC: (((, ʔɛl)_σ)_ω(('se:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 NWO: (((, ʔɛ)_σ)_ω((, ve:)_σ)_ω(('jo:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase},
 PvdA: (((, pe:)_σ)_ω((, fe:)_σ)_ω((, de:)_σ)_ω(('ja:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}
 VVD: (((, fe)_σ)_ω((, fe:)_σ)_ω(('de:)_σ)_ω)_{PPhrase}

There is, however, an asymmetry here, for the acronyms in (12a) can be realised in a letter-naming way – however uncommon this may be –, but this does not work the other way around, for the ones in (12b) can only

¹⁸ These acronyms have a first syllable with a long [a:], though the vowel which the letter <a> represents is short in the full realisation of the constituent which the acronyms abbreviate. This does not mean, that a letter-sounding and a letter-naming realisation are mixed up here. All letters are assigned their phonemic value, so *HAVO*, for instance, has the underlying representation /havo/. The latter, however, can only be realised as [ha:vo:], for a syllable has to be in conformity with the minimal rhyme constraint, which demands that the syllable rhyme consist of either a short vowel + a consonant, a long vowel or a diphthong. Of necessity, then, the vowels of an underlying representation like /havo/ undergo automatic lengthening.

be realised in a letter-naming way. It may be concluded that the letter-naming way of realising an acronym is the unmarked and the letter-sounding way the marked case; put in the form of an implicational statement: if the letter-sounding pronunciation is possible, the letter-naming one is possible as well, but not the other way around. In the scenario in (11), B1 counts as the 'special case' and B2 as the 'elsewhere case' (or the 'general case').

Some acronyms have both a letter-naming and a letter-sounding realisation; examples are *NOS*, *SOA* and *ING*, which are either realised as [nɒs], [so:wa], and [ɪŋ] (letter-sounding) or as [ʔɛn o: ʔɛs], [ʔɛz o: wa:], and [i jɛŋ ge:] (letter-naming). Such dual realisations call for a slight modification of the scenario, in the sense that B2 is an obligatory step. The latter, though, might be a marked option if B1 yields a well-formed result or, put differently, the application of B1 might block the application of B2.

There are also acronyms which are only realised in a letter-naming way, whereas a letter-sounding realisation cannot be ruled out on phonological grounds. Take for instance *FA*, *KRO*, and *AB*, which are never realised as [fa:], [kro:], and [ap] – though in themselves well-formed words –, but only as the phrases [ʔɛv 'ʔa:], [ka: ʔɛr 'ʔo:], and [ʔa: 'be:], respectively. It is unclear to me why the letter-sounding realisation is never employed here.

5. Concluding remarks

I hope to have shown that acronyms have interesting linguistic properties, which are worthy of further investigation.

There is also a more general point to be made. Most linguists hold the view that written language is a secondary phenomenon, as opposed to spoken language, a view to which I adhere. It cannot be denied, however, that written language plays a pervasive role in a highly organised, complex, and literate society as ours, of which the occurrence and use of acronyms provides a good illustration. But notwithstanding the importance of the alphabet per se with respect to the formation and the behaviour of acronyms, in the end it is the phonology which determines how they are realised.

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Appendix A

The letters of the Frisian alphabet and their full form according to Halbertsma (1833:4)

<i>letter</i>	<i>full form</i>
A	a
B	bie
C	sie
D	die
E	é
F	effe
G	gie
H	ha
I	ij
J	jé
K	ka
L	elle
M	im
N	in
O	o
P	pie
Q	kjou
R	arre
S	esse
T	tie

U	uw
W	duwbelde ou
X	ekset
Y	ijjet
Z	zeddet

Compared with the overview in (1), several things are worth mentioning:

1) The vowel support to the right of consonant representing letters is nowadays instantiated by /e:/, in Halbertsma's overview by <ie> (/iə/), which has regularly developed from /e:/, cf. Modern Frisian *stien* and Old Frisian *stēn* 'stone'. This pertains to <b,c,d,g,p,t>.

2) The letter <j>, however, is not supported by <ie>, but by <é> (/e:/). This can be considered an OCP-effect. In Frisian, the sequence /ji/ is highly disfavoured, witness words like *tsiis* 'cheese' and *tsien* 'ten', which were once *tsjiis* and *tsjien*, whereas the <j> of the word *jier* 'year' is no longer pronounced, so that in effect *jier* and *ier* 'early; blood vessel' have become homophonous.

3) The consonant representing letters with vowel support to the left – <f,l,r,s> – have a bisyllabic full form in Halbertsma's overview, whereas they are monosyllabic at present. <y> and <z> are also bisyllabic, which conveys the impression that <y> counts as a consonant representing letter, though it is a variant of the vowel representing letter <i>. It strikes one that <m> and <n> are monosyllabic. All in all, Halbertsma's full forms are more consistently trocheic than the current ones.

4) <m> en <n> have the full forms *im* (/im/) and *in* (/in/), which show the common raising of /ɛ/ to /i/ before nasals.

5) <r> has the full form *arre* (/arə/), which links up with the frequently occurring alternation between /ar/ and /ɛr/ in Frisian.

6) <q>'s full form *kjou* resembles the full form of the same letter in English to a great extent, whereas today's full form, /ky/, parallels the Dutch one. The same holds for the letter <w>.

We can safely conclude that in the course of time the full form of the letters of the Frisian and the Dutch alphabet have become identical. It

may also be, however, that Halbertsma has deliberately taken as much distance from Dutch as possible here.

Appendix B

The acronyms mentioned in this paper

<i>acronym</i>	<i>full form</i>
AB	Algemien Bestjoer
Afûk	Algemeene Fryske Underrjochtskommisje
AJO	A.J. Osinga (man's name and name of a publishing firm)
ANS	Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst
ANWB	Algemene Nederlandse Wielrijdersbond
AVRO	Algemene Vereniging Radio-Omroep
AZG	Academisch Ziekenhuis Groningen
BKO	Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs
DS	Deputearre Steaten
dvd	digital versatile disc
EO	Evangelische Omroep
FA	Fryske Akademy
FD	Friesch Dagblad
FNP	Fryske Nasjonale Partij
G&W	Gezond en Wel (a chain of shops)
HAVO	Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs
ING	Internationale Nederlanden Groep
KRO	Katholieke Radio-Omroep
LAB	Leeuwarder Auto Bedrijf
LABO	Leeuwarder Auto Bus Onderneming
LC	Leeuwarder Courant
NNO	Noord Nederlands Orkest
NOF	Noord-Oost-Friesche Autobusonderneming
NOS	Nederlandse Omroep Stichting
NWO	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek
OER	Onderwijs en Examen Regeling
PIN	Persoonlijk Identificatie Nummer
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij

sms	short message service
SOA	Seksueel Overdraagbare Aandoening
VARA	Vereniging van Arbeiders-Radio-Amateurs
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en democratie
VW	Volkswagen
Wmo	Wet op de maatschappelijke ondersteuning