

## Key words:

Word Formation

Syllable

Clipping

Hypocoristics

Diminutives

## The syllable in word-formation processes

Roots, stems, morphemes or words are seen as the basis for word formation processes in various morphological theories. In this presentation it will be argued that the syllable can also form the basis for word formation processes. These word formation processes discussed here are the formation of clippings, hypocoristics and embellished clippings. Also diminutive formation can take the syllable as its starting point. The examples presented in this abstract come from English. In the oral presentation also examples from French, Swedish, Dutch and Afrikaans will be discussed.

Clipping is a non-morphemic word-formation process which is best described as a derivational process since clipped forms are always truncated from longer full forms. Clipping usually operates from right to left, which is called back clipping (1), although there are a few instances of fore clipping (2):

- (1) sax < saxophone                      (2) coon < racoon  
nip(s) < nipples                      droid < android  
tute < tutor                              plane < aeroplane/airplane

The resulting forms are usually monosyllabic. There are a few disyllabic examples ending in a (X)VC syllable, *exam* < *examination*, *celeb* < *celebrity* but in most of these cases a monosyllabic clipped form is blocked by the presence of a pre-existing word, e.g. *ex* and *cell*.

In addition to this traditional clipping process, a new form of clipping has recently emerged (3):

- (3) psycho < psychopath  
paedo < paedophile  
dipso < dipsomaniac

The examples in (3) are trochaic, which is the most preferred foot/word form in English. Most disyllabic trochaic clipping in English exhibit final *-o*. That is why embellished clippings also show a preference for *-o* (4), next to *-y/-ie* (5) which originates in the similar diminutive suffix.

- (4) lesbo < lesbian + *-o*                      (5) Chevvy < Chevrolet + *-y*  
relo < relative + *-o*                      sissie < sister + *-ie*  
afro < African + *-o*                      ciggie < cigarette + *-ie*

The formation of embellished clippings starts with truncation to a monosyllabic form. Subsequently a suffix is added to result in a most preferred trochaic output. The same process applies to hypocoristics (6):

- (6) Andy < Andrew + *-y*  
Debbie < Deborah + *-ie*  
Monty < Montgomery + *-y*

Diminutives like the examples under (7) must also start from a monosyllabic base:

(7) doggie < dog

mousy < mouse

sweety < sweet

The examples presented here show that the word-formation processes from which they arise make use of the syllable. Examples (3) – (6) make it clear that the trochaic stress pattern of the resulting form is also important.

#### Reference

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