OMG the Word-Final Alveopalatals are Cray-Cray Prev:
A Morphophonological Account of Totes Constructions in English

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This paper examines the formation and morphophonology of totes truncation, a previously undescribed morphophonological process, with the aim of describing the construction and discussing its implications for phonological theory. These constructions are generally used by young adults in speech and electronically. This work is based on two data sets comprised of tokens pulled from text messages and a variety of social media sites, with the understanding that the informal electronic tokens are reflective of spoken ones.

Totes constructions are formed by combining totes, a shortened form of the English adverb totally, and an optionally truncated stem. For example, totes atrosh, pronounced [tʰoʊʃ əˈtʊəʃ], is the totes truncated form of totally atrocious. Formation proceeds step by step, beginning with the identification of the syllable carrying the target word’s primary stress. Next, the stressed syllable’s coda is maximized via prosodic template matching (McCarthy & Prince 1986, Weeda 1992), and the extratemplatic material deleted (EM). Finally, truncated forms optionally take an affective suffix (AS).

An example of coda maximization is presented in Figure 1, and truncation formation is outlined step by step in the Table 2.

Figure 1, Coda Maximization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rime type: VCC</th>
<th>comfortable /ˈkamf.tr.bl/</th>
<th>comft [ˈkamft]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k m f t r b l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2, Truncation Formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>base word</th>
<th>near /ˈnɪjɪ/</th>
<th>interesting /ˈɪn.tɪ̃ʃənɪ/</th>
<th>promiscuous /ˈprɔmɪskjʊwəs/</th>
<th>abbreviation /ˈbui̯v.ɪ̯v.ˈɪ̯n/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>locate primary stress</td>
<td>‘nɪjɪ</td>
<td>‘ɪn.tɪ̃ʃənɪ</td>
<td>ˈpʀɔmɪsk.ˈɪ̯wəs</td>
<td>ˈbui̯v.ˈɪ̯v.ˈɪ̯n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximize coda</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘ɪn.tɪ̃ʃənɪ</td>
<td>ˈpʀɔmɪsk.ˈɪ̯wəs</td>
<td>ˈbui̯v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete EM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘ɪn.tɪ̃ʃənɪ</td>
<td>ˈpʀɔmɪsk</td>
<td>ˈbui̯v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surface TT form</td>
<td>‘nɪjɪ</td>
<td>‘ɪn.tɪ̃ʃənɪ</td>
<td>ˈpʀɔmɪsk</td>
<td>ˈbui̯v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS (Optional)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ˈbui̯v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While totes constructions vary in which affective suffixes they can take, speakers’ treatment of the source material converges on an “ideal” form, which is the result of post-lexical prosodic template mapping and maximization (Kiparsky 1982, Mohanan 1982).

Unattested tautosyllabic sequences that are the result of totes truncation come in two varieties: CC codas and VC(C) rimes that are monomorphic and previously unattested, but with well-formed sonority contours, and those classified as exceptional forms. The well-formed but unattested sequences are [mb], [nf], [lg], [ldg], [ug], [êð], [esp], [iʃts], [eʃ], [oʊʃ], [eʃ], [jʊwɛ], [jʊwɡ], and [iʃd]. The three exceptional forms are presumpsh (< presumptuous), scrumpsh (< scrumptious), and pumpk (< pumpkin), and are analyzed as the analogous expansion of a phonotactic constraint to include consonantal morphemes. Additionally relevant is the post-lexical nature of the truncation process;
truncated forms exhibit coarticulatory effects (cf. \([\text{ɪn}\ \text{ʧ}] < \text{interesting}, [\text{æf}\  \text{ɹ}  \text{ә} \text{ʤ}] < \text{aphrodisiac}\) and consonantal reassociation across morpheme and word boundaries in addition to syllable boundaries (cf. \([\text{ˈbʊl}] < \text{bullshit}, [\text{ˈtij}] < \text{t-shirt}\).)

Traditional theories of English phonotactics unjustifiably conflate the notions of unattestedness and illicitness. Totes truncation poses problems for these theories in that many of the truncated forms end in unattested consonant clusters. The previously unattested clusters are considered illicit and ill-formed within these theories, but are strongly preferred by users of this construction. Additionally, totes truncated forms exhibit co-occurrence restrictions not present in un-totesed English. This work provides valuable data for linguistic theories of English phonotactics, which have traditionally drawn their evidence from synchronic sources like grammaticality judgments and written corpora.

The most unexpected pattern present in the truncated forms is the disproportionate presence of word-final alveopalatal consonants. Of the 618 tokens in the data sets, 180 (29.1%) end in a final alveopalatal consonant. There are two reasons for this: phonological conditioning and expressive palatalization. For example, the final alveopalatal consonants in \([\text{gɹʊʃ}] < \text{grocery}\) and \([\text{mjuf}] < \text{mutual}\) are the result of deleting extratemplatic material post-lexically. Affective palatalization is common cross-linguistically, and is often employed to signal diminutivization (Kochetov & Alderete 2010, Chen 1973, Bhat 1978, Ohala 1994, Nichols 1971) but has so far been unattested in English. Aside from the huge proportion of word-final alveopalatal consonants generally present, there are at least six clear examples of affective palatalization in the data: \text{awesh} (< \text{aves} < \text{awesome}), \text{deesh} (< \text{deece} < \text{decent}), \text{(im)posh} (< \text{im/poss} < \text{im/possible}), \text{impresh} (< \text{impress} < \text{impressive}), \text{and maybsh} (< \text{mayb} < \text{maybe}).

There are no phonological triggers of palatalization in these examples. Five of the six shift from word-final [s] to [ʃ], but do so following a reduced, central vowel, which is not a conditioning environment for phonological palatalization. \text{Maybsh} is the outlier and is truly exceptional; it has an exclusively affectively motivated [ʃ] just tacked on to the end.

References: