Exploring the evaluative nature of Adj+*ie/y* nominalisations in contemporary English

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The form and function of *-ie/y* derivatives in English are extensively discussed in literature (e.g. Bauer *et al.* 2015; Mattiello 2013; Schneider 2003; etc.), but not much attention is given to these units in Cognitive Linguistics, though some publications (e.g. Besedina 2012; Hamawand 2011) demonstrate that affixes belonging to the evaluative domain open a wide range of questions for cognitive analysis. This study focuses on the nominalising function of the *-ie/y* suffix and Adj+*ie/y* nominalisations (e.g. *softie*, *brownie*) in particular, with the purpose of investigating how the changes in the semantics of the output units are connected to the conceptual processes that employ evaluative morphological forms.

Adj+*ie/y* nominalisations are interesting for the analysis in the cognitive framework because they fall into the denominal domain of evaluation and may have positive (*brownie* – attractive female of Asian or Latin descent), negative (*fattie* – an overweight person), and neutral (*frenchie* – a French pull-up) connotations. At the same time, irrespective of the quality of connotations, the use of the evaluative suffix results in marginalization of the value of the referent due to the strong association of the suffix with the function of diminution. The formation of such units where an adjectival phrase (a syntactic structure) is reduced to a nominalisation unit by means of both ellipsis and suffixation (e.g. *dutchie* and *blackie* are reduced derivatives of Dutchman and black person respectively) requires more in-depth study that would account for the semantic changes of the output lexemes.

In our research we assume usage-based approach and argue that the meanings realized by the suffix *-ie* in nominalisations of this kind are informed by the semantics of the paradigms of adjectival bases (occasionally clipped), the semantic content of ellipsed nouns, and the use of the *-ie* suffixed forms in reference to similar concepts. This all is believed to contribute to the developing iconicity of the suffix in terms of its strong association with meanings of appreciation and, especially, depreciation and may be connected with the analogical correspondence between this word-formation process and the social function and meaning of embellished suffixes of this kind.

This study reports on the qualitative analysis of 54 examples of Adj+*ie* nominalisations collected from a range of printed prescriptive and descriptive dictionaries of English, as well as reference sources available online. The analysis of the data employs the main tenets of two theoretical frameworks: Fauconnier and Turner's (2008) conceptual blending theory and Besedina's (2012) cognitive model of morphology. Our findings show that the morphological expression of these units reflects a shared cognitive model in a given speech community. Such cognitive model is generally expressed through the gradable property of iconicity, i.e. the iconic value of the suffix can be accounted for by means of the application of the pejoration-endearment scale within the category of 'diminution'.

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