

# Short, but not Sweet: Markedness Preferences and Reversals in English Hypocoristics

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## What phonology properties make a good English hypocoristic?

### Generalizations from previous literature:

- (esp. McCarthy and Prince 1986, 1998; Weede 1992; Lappe 2007)
- truncation to a single foot (i.e. Minimal Word)
  - either a bi-syllabic trochee 'Tommy'
  - or one heavy syllable 'Tom'
- what to keep: usually the base's stressed syllable, possibly suffixed with [-i]
- few *categorical* predictions of which names truncate to which/both/neither form
- e.g.: \*coda rhotics? Benua (1997) vs. Lappe (2007)

### 1σ forms

Abraham → Abe [ejb]  
 Clifford → Cliff [klɪf]  
 Jennifer → Jen [dʒɛn]  
 Albert → Al [æɪ]  
 Jacob → Jake [dʒɛk]  
 Bridget → Bridge [brɪdʒ]

### 1 or 2σ forms

Thomas → [tʰam],  
 Tom, Tommy [tʰami]  
 Elizabeth → [lɪz],  
 Liz, Lizzie [lɪzi]

### 2σ forms

Wallace → Wally [waɪi],  
 ?\*[waɪ]  
 Terrance → Terry [tʰɛɪi],  
 ?\*[tʰɛɪ]

## Two Further (Gradient) Intuitions that This Study Investigates

- (i) Are 2σ forms better *women's* nicknames?  
 ... or are 1σ forms better *men's* nicknames? (... and if so: why? how?)
- (ii) Does a *lower sonority* consonant make a better coda for 1σ men's nicknames? (markedness reversal?)

## Does Coda Sonority Predict Whether Men's Hypocoristics are Coined?

- corpus of 121 men's full names: all those in Stewart (1979) & Whitycombe (1977) which were recognized as current by UofA undergrads, and also contain a potential singleton coda for truncation (eg. Peter → [pit])
- proportion with attested 1-syllable truncations suggests some amount of low-sonority preference:

	voiceless stops	13/15	87%	nasals	15/26	58%
	voiced stops	16/18	89%	[l]	10/17	58%
	voiceless fricatives	10/19	53%	[ɹ]	0/17	0%
	voiced fricatives	4/9	44%			

## Do Coda Sonority, Gender & Syllable Count All Influence Their Ratings?

### Questionnaire Methods

- 22 UofAlberta undergrads, all native to western Canada

Man's full name: **Cameron**  
 Heard it before? Y N

A nickname: **Cam**  
 Heard it before? Y N

How good a shortform do you think **Cam** is for **Cameron**?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

### Properties manipulated:

- final-C sonority
- 1 vs 2σ truncations
- gender of form

### Properties controlled:

- stressed vowel quality
- familiarity of full names

### Results

#### Syllable Count Results:

- overall, 1σ-truncations were preferred (2-tailed t-test assuming unequal variance: p < 0.001)
- overwhelmingly due to *men's* 1σs judged better than 2σs (t-test on *women's* 1 vs 2σ: p = 0.29)

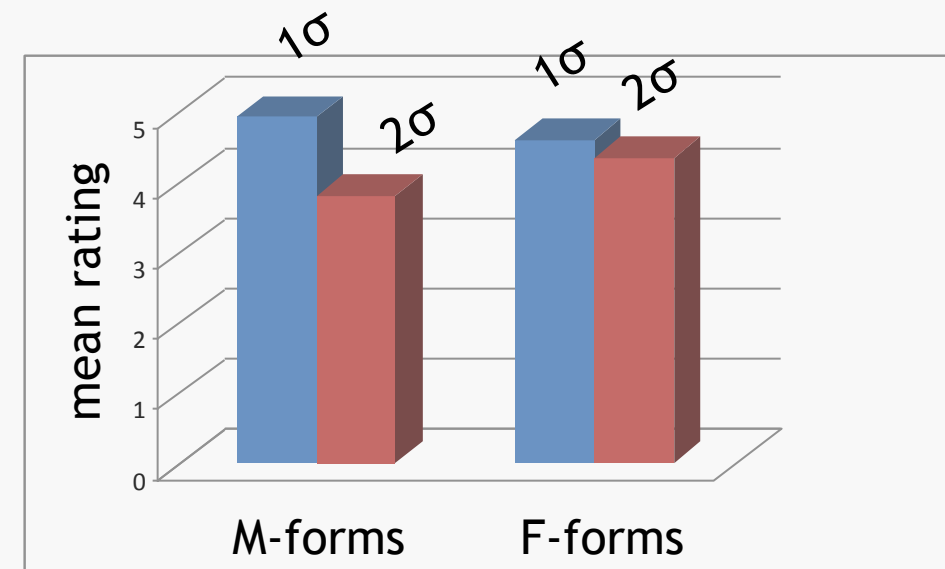
- 1σ men's preference holds across pairwise item comparisons

#### Sonority Results:

- men's 1σ ratings improve as coda sonority decreases
- women's do not
- however: men's 2σ forms are not preferred as an avoidance strategy

### Graphs and Means

	M-forms	F-forms
1σ forms' mean ratings	4.944	4.628
2σ forms' mean ratings	3.823	4.367



	M-forms	F-forms
Mean of 2σ-1σ by item (SD)	-1.081(1.7)	-0.271(1.8)

#### Ratings by coda sonority (var. from μ)



**Results: Men's nicknames ARE judged better (i) if they are monosyllabic (ii) if they end in less sonorous Cs**

## Putting phonological pressure on hypocoristics

### Starting Assumptions (esp. McCarthy & Prince 1986, Ito et al 1996, Antilla 2002)

- Grammar of ranked+unranked constraints
- Two truncation types, in URs: /tʰaməs + TRUNC/ → 'Tom'
- Size (i.e. 1 foot) driven by ALIGN L,R(Ft, Wd) /tʰaməs + TRUNC + i/ → 'Tommy'
- Content chosen by MAXSTRESSEDV-BT
- SWP (Prince 1990) prefers 1σ truncation (Gouskova 2004), but overruled by a UR /-i/:

/ˈɛmɪti +TRUNC/	SWP	MAX-V BT	MAX-SEG BT
(ˈɛ.mɪ)	*!		**
☞ (ˈɛm)			***
(ˈmɪt)		*!	**

/ˈɛmɪti +TRUNC+ i/	REALIZE MORPH	SWP	MAX-SEG BT
☞ (ˈɛ.mi)		*!	**
(ˈɛm)	*!		***

Caveat about when the grammar is doing this work: fossilized in lexicon? (cf. Zuraw 2000)

## Creating the men's preference for 1σ Hypocoristics

### Proposal: Two UR suffixes, /-i/ FEM & /-i/ MASC, protected by two REALIZEMORPHS

- REALIZEMORPH /-i/ FEM (Kurusu 2001) crucially ranks above SWP, as in 'Emily' → 'Emmy'
- But REALIZEMORPH /-i/ MASC is crucially unranked with SWP (in spirit of Antilla 2002)
- Crucially unranked constraints are randomly ranked wrt each other on every use

### Upshot:

When a total order is chosen in which SWP >> RM /-i/ MASC:

/ˈdʒɛkəb MASC +TRUNC + i/	SWP	REALIZEMORPH /-i/ MASC	MAX-SEG BT
(ˈdʒe.ki)	*!		**
☞ (ˈdʒɛk)		*	**

1σ truncation is the only option

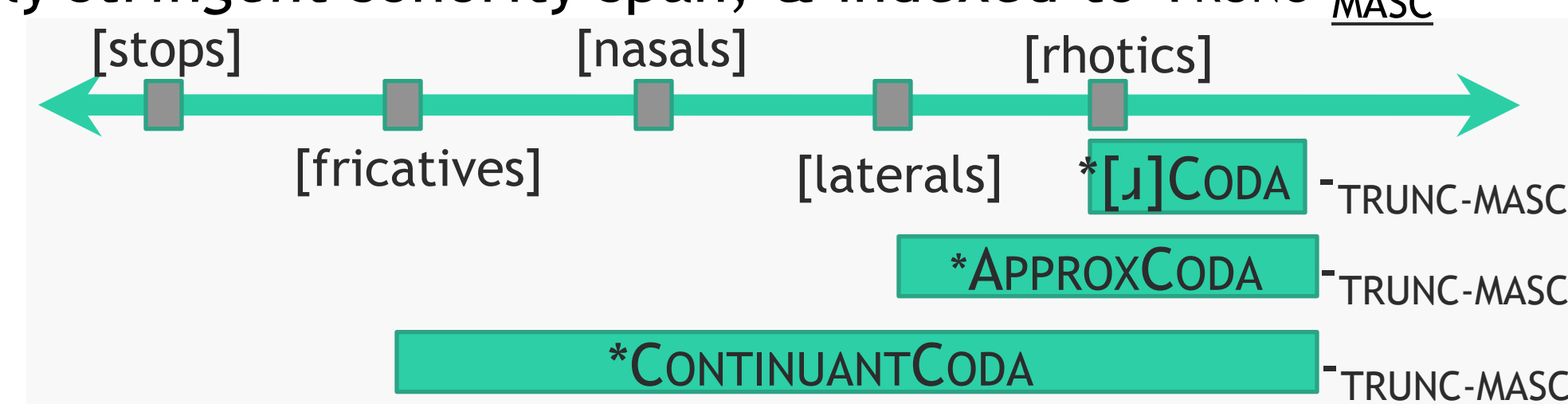
## Creating the Coda Sonority markedness reversal

### Ingredient 1: Proposal of \*[SONORITYSPAN]-CODA family (relatedly see Baertsch 2002)

- each ban codas in an increasingly *stringent* sonority span, & indexed to TRUNC-MASC

### Ingredient 2: MPARSE, violated by a failure to coin any hypocoristic for a name: [⊙]

(see Prince & Smolensky 1993: 48ff)



\*[SONSPAN]-CODA family unranked wrt MPARSE: {\*[ɹ]CODA, \*APPROXCODA, MPARSE, ... etc.}

### Upshot: the higher sonority of the potential 1σ coda, the more likely a null parse

/tʰɛɪns +TRUNC/	*[ɹ]CODA TRUNC-MASC	MPARSE	*CONTCODA TRUNC-MASC
(tʰɛɪ)		*	
☞ ⊙	*!		

/klɪfɪd +TRUNC/	*[ɹ]CODA TRUNC-MASC	MPARSE	*CONTCODA TRUNC-MASC
☞ ('klɪf)			*
⊙		*!	

**Take Home Message: Cross-linguistic phonology can be co-opted for online word-coining processes in novel ways**  
**One Next Question: What other properties influence these judgments?**

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