

# A Po-Mo Boho in SoHo: Emerging Specificity in English Templatic Hypocoristics

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Hypocoristic formation in modern English typically involves a pattern of truncation and suffixation, yielding a bisyllabic output form (e.g. [dʒɛ.ni] ‘Jennifer,’ [bɛ.ki] ‘Rebecca’). Such a process is described by Itô and Mester (1997) as being non-templatic; truncations are maximally faithful to their base and constrained by a language’s minimal prosodic word. We document the existence of a new process of hypocoristic formation in English which we argue does make use of templatic morphology, at the expense of base faithfulness.

“CoCo truncation” constrains the base, which may be a single word or group of words, as in a title or compound, to the form  $C_1+o.C_2+o$ , with  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  being the onsets of the first and second syllables of the base word, or the initial syllables of the component words in the case of a compound base. Though a number of the instances in our corpus are formed from a base whose first or second syllable (or first or second component word) does contain /o/, assimilation at a distance (vowel harmony or umlaut) is not the correct analysis for this process, as the direction of putative assimilation is not consistent: compare [tro.gro] ‘Trojan Grounds’ (a coffee shop) to [fro.gro] ‘Fresh Grocer’ (a grocery chain). Furthermore, examples exist in which no word in the base contains /o/: [mo.do] ‘Maureen Dowd,’ [so.ko] ‘Southern Comfort,’ [so.ho] ‘South (of) Houston’ (neighborhood in New York City, pronounced [həʊ.stən]). Though the onsets of the base form are retained in the hypocoristic, even when they are complex, coda consonants are not: e.g. [mo.fo] ‘Morrison and Foerster’ (a law firm). We argue that the above evidence is best supported by a templatic analysis.

CoCo truncation appears to be a more specific form of another relatively recent process of hypocoristic formation, which simply creates a bisyllabic output form by matching the base to the template CV.CV: e.g. [wa.po] ‘Washington Post,’ [do.pa] ‘Dolores Park.’ Using frequency data drawn from internet text and audio, we argue that the more specific Co.Co template is replacing the more generic CV.CV template.

We also compare CoCo truncation to a third process of English hypocoristic formation, in which the first syllable of the base is selected and reduplicated (e.g. [po.po] ‘police’), a process similar to one seen in French (e.g. [ni.ni] ‘Nicole’) (Nelson 1998), as well as to the cross-linguistic typology of hypocoristic formation.