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Stump Words in English

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In this joint research, we attempted to clarify the mechanism of generating what is called stump words in English, which are formed through the truncation of part of a word. In the first place, we provided a brief review of Mester (1989), who hypothesizes that in the stump word formation in English, the first syllable of a word serves as a template. His hypothesis accounts for the existence of the examples listed in (1), which are formed either through the truncation of the first syllable of a word or through the truncation and the addition of a suffix-like form.

- (1) a. *còmposition* > *cóm* *dórmitory* > *dórm*
 márgarine > *márg* *prégnant* > *prég*
 b. * *prégnant* > *prég-ger* *Bólshevik* > *Bólsh-y*
 cómfortable > *cómf-y* *cómbinátion* > *cómb-o*

We pointed out, however, that his hypothesis is falsified by the following examples, all of which are formed through the truncation of the first and second syllable of a word.

- (2) *exàmínation* > *exám* *matriculátion* > *matric*
 legítimate > *legít* *phenómenon* > *phenóm*

Thus, we attempted to present a new analysis of English stump word formation which is capable of a unified treatment of the data in (1) and (2). We hypothesized that in English a foot serves as a template for stump word formation on the grounds that in (1) and (2) truncation meets the requirement that syllables truncated range from the word-initial to the first stressed syllable.

We then turned to a consideration of a foot type crucially involved in stump word formation. We demonstrated that the feet on the stress plane of English, which are binary, quantity-sensitive, left-headed, and constructed from right to left with the specification of suffixes as extrametrical, do not count in stump word formation, because, as shown in (3), the first and second syllables do not constitute a foot and thus cannot be truncated as a unit.

- (3) * * . * . cf. * . .
 (*)(* *)(*) . (*)
e xami na <tion> pregn<ant>

This led us to adopt a biplanar analysis, which has proved to be valid in analyses of a number of segmental phenomena like Old English High Vowel Deletion. Our analysis assumes another metrical plane independent of the stress plane, which we tentatively call the truncation plane. In fact, the feet on the plane, which we assume to be binary, quantity-sensitive, right-headed, and constructed from left to right, provide a principled account of English stump word formation. This is illustrated in the metrical structure for *examination* in (4), where the first and second syllables constitute a foot, a unit to which truncation has access.

- (4) . * . * * cf. * *
 (* *) (* *) (*) (*)(*)
exam ina tion pregnant

We can now capture English stump word formation by the following simple rule.

- (5) Specify the word-initial foot on the truncation plane as a template for stump words.