

Félix Rodríguez González / José A. Sánchez Fajardo

Morpho-syntactic variations in English and Spanish clipped words: a contrastive study

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Abstract: Clipping and linguistic variation are inexorably interconnected. Shortened or elliptical words reflect a great deal of variability of the language, especially in the morphological and phonological levels. The object of this study is precisely to explore the phono-graphemic and grammatical variations occurred in the visible changes undergone by clipped words in Spanish and English. A contrastive analysis of this type reveals both expectedly different correspondences in terms of gender and number, and surprisingly parallel lexico-syntactic features. This suggests that clipped or elliptical units are not only necessarily dependent on intrinsic morpho-grammatical and phonological traits, but they are also characterized by regularities and universal patterns that might show disruptive or “corrupted” constructs. This analysis confirms the peculiarities of clipping and linguistic variations in both languages, in an attempt to comprehend the interconnection between functional motivations, and morphological and phonological changes.

Keywords: clipping, ellipsis, morphology, phonology, English, Spanish, contrastive studies

1 Introduction

The study of word-building processes represents an intriguing field in lexicology and semantics, probably due to the array of pragma-semantic shifts and constructs found. The set-up of various formation patterns allows researchers in

Correspondence address: Prof. Dr. Félix Rodríguez González, Universidad de Alicante, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Carretera San Vicente del Raspeig, s/n, E-03080 Alicante, E-Mail: frodgonzalez@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. José A. Sánchez Fajardo, Universidad de Alicante, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Carretera San Vicente del Raspeig, s/n, E-03080 Alicante, E-Mail: jasanchez@ua.es

general to establish a correlation of semantic and morphological structures in a given context. The depiction of clipped-word patterns is indispensable to determine recurrent word-building models and universal, or divergent, variations, as the preliminary hypothesis centers on the existence of morpho-grammatical extrapolation from full words to clipped ones. Stated differently, clipped words can be the resulting constructs of grammar and morphological rules, conceived to embed the truncated units with structural association and regularities.

In general, there has been great interest in the visible features of clipping concerning typology or morphological structures (cf. Marchand 1969; Rodríguez González 1975, 1977; Steinhäusl 1984; Cannon 1987; Rainer 1993; Alvar Ezquerro 1995; Lipka 2002; Plag 2003; Jamet 2009; Fábregas Alegret 2014; Steinhauer 2015). However, the study of phono-graphemic and grammatical variations of English and Spanish clipped words might shed more light on converging processes and dissimilar patterns. Having a multi-linguistic study is intended to ascertain universalities and divergences of the word-building mechanism in order to have a better understanding of how clipping is tightly linked to linguistic variations. This analysis is precisely aimed at delving into these regularities and anomalies to determine how English and Spanish clipping processes are linguistically governed by intrinsic, at times coincidental, morpho-grammatical systems.

The present article constitutes a descriptive and normative analysis of the variationist aspects of language in the process of clipping. By dividing the research study into two sections, i.e. phonological/spelling variations and grammatical variations, both languages are depicted and contrasted in a comprehensive fashion. The categorization of these changes illustrates the complexity and irregularities of clipping, and how these models reflect the varying and consistent nature of these two languages.

2 Methodology

To describe and illustrate the morpho-grammatical variations of clipped words in Spanish and English, a comprehensive two-stage procedure needs to be established: data collection and data analysis. The first stage necessarily involves the compilation of abbreviated words from written. These written sources include dictionaries (Gates/Boatner/Makkei 1975; Alvar Ezquerro/Miró Domínguez 1983; Ayto 1998; Antoine 2000; Partridge 2000; Ruiz Fernández 2001; MWD11; OED3; DEA; DLE23; Rodríguez González 2017), and magazines/newspapers (*Times*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Washington Post*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Bismarck Tribune*, *Irish Daily Mail*, *Australian Weekend*, *The Globe and Mail*, *New Society*, *The Billboard*, *El País*, *La Verdad*, *Abc*, *Sur*). The resulting corpus compiles an array of

abbreviated forms in both languages, characterized by noticeable differences in terms of context, register, regionalism, and etymology.¹

The combination of systemic sources (dictionaries) and authentic co-texts (magazine/newspapers) has contributed to the elaboration of an annotated corpus, whereby four identifiers are easily discernible: motivation, part-of-speech tagging, full word (etymon), and co-text (if available). Lexical frequency, productivity, or regional differences have not been taken into consideration as the present study merely focuses on morphological and grammar variations. A number of 117 clipped words in English and 106 clipped words in Spanish have been annotated. This descriptive analysis is not intended to provide statistical data as the annotated corpus has been conceived as a data-collection device to have a better picture of how these abbreviated units have undergone phono-graphemic changes in these two languages. Likewise, the colloquial or slangy nature of clipped words, particularly in Spanish, determines the restricted availability of slang words in contemporary corpora since many of the materials used as corpus-feeders are written sources, e.g. newspapers, magazines, books, etc. (Sanmartín Sáez 2016b, 190). Thus, a corpus-based analysis is rather limited and insufficient to show usage, frequency, collocation and co-occurrence. Stated differently, entries and corpus tags have been essentially used to determine the typology and patterns of clipped words in both languages.

The second stage is fundamentally based on empirical analysis, whereby the morpho-syntactic variations are verified through a series of *tertia comparationis*, intended to lay the groundwork for a more coherent arrangement of the information and examples gathered from the previous stage. These points of contrast are divided into two major groups: (1) phonological and spelling variation, and (2) grammatical variation. The former involves morphological locus and phono-graphemic changes whereas the latter depicts the variable categories of gender and number in English and Spanish, in which a special distinction is given to distinctive anglicized clippings in Spanish.

The elaboration of an annotated corpus of this type entails both a paradigmatic illustration of the lexical units extracted, and a syntagmatic study of their features and functions within the utterance. The arrangement of examples and patterns according to a pre-established *tertium comparationis* adds more visibility and transparency to the observational process as divergent and common forms and strategies are easily found. In the following sections, a more in-depth study

1 The written publications date as early back as 1970s, in which a number of clipped units were becoming an essential part of the journalistic style at the time.

of these corpus-based arrangements, or annotations, is provided, accompanied by authentic texts and a number of illustrative examples.

3 The concept and origin of clipping

The process of clipping, or lexical truncation, is not a new word-building process. It entails the shortening of a lexical unit through the “mutilation” of a lexical base, e.g. *capital* < *capital letter* (En.), of a morpheme, *yank* < *Yankee* (En.), or merely random graphemes, e.g. *uni* < *universidad* (Sp.), *varsity* < *university* (En.). By and large, these elliptical forms result from the “mincing” of full words, leading to morphological neologisms.

Clipping is in fact used as an umbrella term, which makes reference to any type of word “truncation” or “mincing” occurring at the lexical or morphological level. However, clipping involves the trimming of a word so as to create a shorter version of such a word by loss of material. “Clipping is the process of shortening a word without changing its meaning or part of speech [...] clipping frequently does change the stylistic value of the word” (Bauer 1994, 40). Some authors even refer to clipped words more generally as “mots tronqués” (Doppagne 1979, 73; ‘truncated words’ in English), and the concept is used for both clippings and abbreviations as in *M.* < *monsieur*, *vol.* < *volume*, *p.* < *page*.

Clipping should be differentiated from the process of lexical ellipsis, which is a type of shortening based on the truncation of an entire lexical unit (or units) as in *zoo* < *zoological garden*, *mob* < *mobile vulgus*. Such examples show how both processes, namely clipping and ellipsis, might be involved in the shortening mechanism. The conceptual scope of the processes of clipping and ellipsis is highly significant to have a better understanding of how these two word-building mechanisms affect both lexical and morphological levels in English and Spanish. However, to avoid typological ambiguity and conceptual clash, both clipped and ellipsed words have been distinguished in the present analysis.

Lexical ellipsis is clearly of a different nature from the syntactical ellipsis described by Quirk/Greenbaum/Leech/Svartvik (1972, 536–550). Stylistically speaking, this abbreviating phenomenon is mostly related to the avoidance of repetition and redundancy. However, according to this classification, clipping falls into “non-productive cases” of ellipsis as it describes word shortening as “ellipsis of part of a word”, e.g. (*tele*)*phone*, (*air*)*plane*, *photo*(*graph*), (*in*)*flu*(*enza*), etc. (Quirk/Greenbaum/Leech/Svartvik 1972, 549). Despite its practical and comprehensive implications, this nomenclature reveals an imprecise distinction between morphological and lexical reductions. Whereas the former does not necessarily involve any changes of part-of-speech and referential categories (*exam* <

examination), the latter, on the other hand, encompasses the permutation of semantic and syntactic traits (*comic* (n.) < *comic book* or *comic strip*).

The multiple labels for truncated units seem to denote some kind of conceptual redundancy or ambiguity. Almela Pérez (1999) uses the term “substraction” to refer to the loss of any element of the word base, in which one of the concepts described is precisely ‘abbreviation’. It stands for the clipping of non-affix elements, and it is divided into “shortening” and “abbreviation”. The former describes the subtraction of syllables or graphemes (“clipping”) whereas the latter shows a graphic reduction of words (“ellipsis”).

One of the most relevant features of clipped words is their lexical and syntactic autonomy. This suggests that their combinability value is kept, and they might combine freely with other bases as in *bro* < *brother*:

“A week from now, I will be *broing* out, hard. It’s not a boast [...] Just like a tattooed guy in skinny jeans who would never cop to being a hipster despite his handlebar mustache, pork pie hat and tattoo of a pork pie hat with a mustache, no one ever actually thinks of himself as a *bro*, no matter how *bro*-like his behaviour” (The Globe and Mail, 18 September, 2015).

The fact is that the complexity of clipped or elliptical units does not rely on the truncation of graphemes, morphemes or lexemes. Their actual difficulty conforms to a wide range of semantic changes, which are fully dependent on speakers, referents or context. The varying traits revealed by clipped words might serve as a unique element in the conveyance of communicative functions. This explains why *bro* has acquired such an adaptability scope. Humor or hilarity are evidently part of these driving factors, and their results are easily perceived in a text.

Semantic variability and the degree of differences between clipped words and their full words are probably two of the most intriguing features of this word-formation process. Some lexicologists have already made clear references to this changeability, and the peculiarities of their motives:

“Additionally, the question may arise of what meaning is associated with truncations. What exactly is the semantic difference between *Ronald* and *Ron*, *laboratory* and *lab*? Although maybe not particularly obvious, it seems that the truncations, in addition to the meaning of the base, signal the familiarity of the speaker with the entity s/he is referring to. The meaning of familiarity can be seen as the expression of a type of social meaning through which speakers signal their belonging to a certain group. In sum, truncations can be assigned a meaning, but the nature of the morph expressing that meaning is problematic” (Plag 2003, 22s.).

“Estos acortamientos se originan en ámbitos sociales reducidos (escolar, familiar, profesional, de la delincuencia, etc.), y se usan generalmente en situaciones menos formales que los lexemas completos equivalentes: connotan una actitud de familiaridad por parte del que las usa, ya sea hacia el objeto denotado, ya hacia el oyente” (Casado Velarde 1985, 85)

[‘These shortenings originate within limited social groups (school, family, work, delinquency, etc.), and they are generally used in less formal situations than equivalent full lexemes: they connote a familiarity attitude by users, either towards the referent, or the hearer’].

A number of researchers have also referred to the process of clipping, particularly in English, from different perspectives (Haspelmath 2002; Plag 2003; Jamet 2009), and they all seem to agree on the fact that not all the resulting units possess the same level of semantic load. Haspelmath (2002, 25) rejects its classification as a word formation process because “their resulting words do not show systematic meaning-sound resemblances of the sort that speakers would recognize”. In other words, their perception is only limited to allomorphs, whose coinages do not result from a conscious process, but a language acquisition (or artificial) mechanism. Jamet (2009, 20s.) highlights their lexeme-like status: collocation (*porn star* not *pornography star*, *gym shoes* not *gymnasium shoes*), grammatical inflections (*phones*, *gators*), compounding (*fridge magnet*, *phone book*). Plag (2003) argues that a clipped word takes on a new meaning, a different connotation from the base lexeme: “we will therefore assume a notion of word-formation wide enough to accommodate name truncations, clippings, and diminutives as products of word-formation” (ib., 117).

In English and Spanish, the majority of the clipped words are monosyllables and bisyllables, which is related with the fundamental motive for abbreviated words: the economy of the language. However, it is not infrequent to find three-syllable truncated words in Spanish, especially related with slang and colloquial speech as in *manifa* ‘demonstration’ < *manifestación* (Casado Velarde 1999, 5079s.).

The semantic evolution of clipped words, particularly their processes of marginalization, is diachronically visible in the way the resulting units denote pejorative or marginal traits. In Spanish, *mani* and *manifa* (< *manifestación*) are in fact near synonyms. As expected, both words share a denotational sememe but their meanings have evolved and differentiated. Whilst *mani* is merely associated with affectivity and familiarity, *manifa* is stylistically linked to slang and colloquial speech (Sanmartín Sáez 2016a). Similarly, in English, *fan* is referentially distinguished from its full word (*fanatic*) in terms of derogation. Though their denotational meaning implies ‘excessive enthusiasm’, *fan* has clearly resulted from a process of semantic amelioration, in which the clipped word is diachronically dissimilar from its full word. The semantic variation of clipped words is not part of the present study, but a significant number of examples used are in fact related with multifaceted processes of morphological and semantic changes.

4 Phonological and spelling variation

This section is devoted to phono-graphemic modifications undergone by Spanish and English clipped and elliptical units. The tight link between phonemic and graphemic shifting requires a comprehensive account of how regular or divergent patterns are established in both languages.

Due to various mechanisms and examples attested, this analysis focuses on two major classification criteria, a two-dimensional depiction: morphological locus (position of changes within the word), and graphemic and phonological variation (lexicalization, typology of such variations, etc.). They are aimed at providing an overall perspective of this word-building process, whereby phonological and orthographic shifts are logically dependent on the morphological features of the full word.

As expected, the rules governing spelling and phonological systems in Spanish and English are unrelated, which are perceived in the number and typology of variations culled. Even so, some coincidental elements reveal the convergent clipping patterns in both analytic (English) and synthetic (Spanish) languages. Such patterns are summarized in a comprehensive and multipart chart showing the classification of these varying units (see Figure 1).

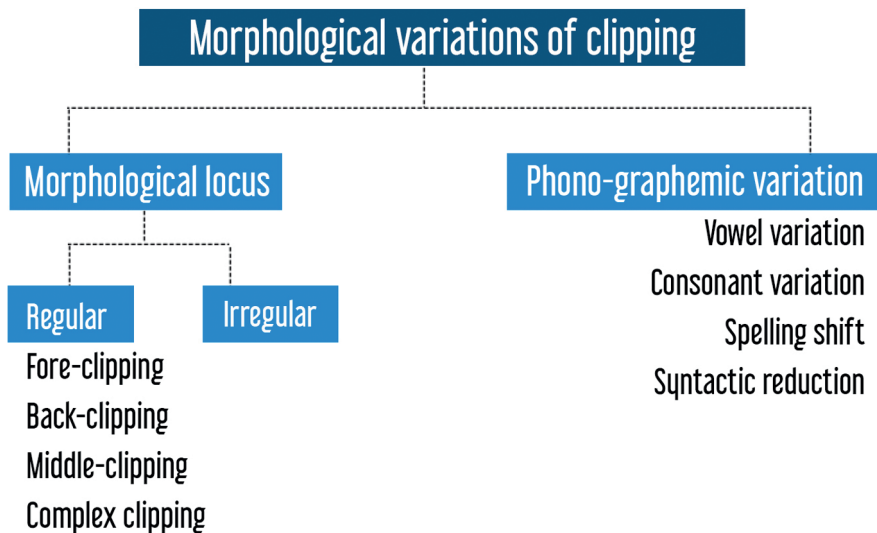


Fig. 1: Classification of morphological variations of clipped words.

4.1 Morphological locus

Traditional lexicologists have recognized two broad-spectrum types of clipping or ellipsis: regular and irregular ones (Sunden 1904, 172s.). This earlier categorization has served to differentiate regular or pattern-like examples like *abs* (< *abdominals*), *bike* (< *motorbike*) and *fridge* (< *Frigidaire*)² from irregular or patternless units such as *Ike* (< *Dwight D. Eisenhower*).

The first group is characterized by fixed truncation patterns on the grounds of the location of the clipped graphemes. Thus, four comprehensive groups are found: fore-clipping or aphaeresis (*cello* < *violoncello*), back-clipping or apocope (*abs* < *abdominals*), middle clipping (*flu* < *influenza*) and complex clipping (*fridge*). This last type is especially multifaceted due to the lexical “opacity” between the abbreviated form and its original word. But even more complex is the truncation of irregular units whose word-building patterns are practically inexistent (*Ike*). One of their distinctive features is the mix of morphological permutation and grapheme insertion, probably motivated by a certain degree of phonological accommodation.

In Spanish, these examples are similarly found: *bici* ‘bicycle’ (< *bicicleta*), *chino* (< *restaurant chino*, *comercio chino*), *munipa* ‘town police officer’ (< *policía municipal*), and *tuey* ‘a baseball movement in which a batter reaches second base’ < *two-base hit*³ which correspond to aphaeresis, apocope, complex clipping, and irregular type respectively. The homonymic feature of the elliptical word *chino* in Spanish shows the semantic extension of such abbreviated forms; sense 1 refers to a Chinese retailer whereas sense 2 is denotatively referring to a Chinese restaurant:

El día en que se disputaba la semifinal contra Alemania, el equipo más digno y noble contra el que se ha enfrentado nuestra selección, fui a un *chino* y me compré por dos euros, cosa que no hubiera imaginado jamás, una camiseta muy guapa (La Verdad, July 17, 2010).

Un *chino* fue luego, con elisión de la palabra “restaurante”, un comedor barato con rollitos primavera: “Cenamos en un chino” (Abc, October 20, 2012).

In English, these orthographic variations are not really restricted by any rules establishing what kind of grapheme should be used in final or initial position of

² According to *Oxford Dictionary of English* (OED3), the origin of *fridge* is in the 1920s, “probably influenced by the proprietary name *Frigidaire*”.

³ This word is mostly used in Latin-American Spanish (Sánchez Fajardo 2016). Most of the Spanish examples in the article are European, but occasionally some American Spanish examples are also introduced to show the regional scope of lexical variability.

the abbreviated unit. However, certain clipping patterns have been identified, and they can be summarized as follows: elliptical reduction or omission (*air* < *air conditioning*, *plane* < *airplane*), clipped affixation (*phone* < *telephone*, *mini* < *miniskirt*), stressed syllable (*doc* < *doctor*, *Will* or *Bill* < *William*), phonological combinability, or sonority⁴ (*Nest* < *Ernest*).

Elliptical reduction is probably the most visible of all these patterns, which is connected to the general concept of abbreviation or shortening, whereby a lexical base is truncated. This lexical truncation might affect any of the bases in compounds, and their preference might be determined by their semantic load and attributive traits. In the examples above (*air conditioning*, *airplane*), the compound words *air-* or *-conditioning* are omitted because their attributive load is probably higher than the bases *-plane* and *-air*. Similarly, in Spanish we find examples of ellipsis: *aire* ‘air conditioning’ < *aire acondicionado*, *fisio* ‘physiotherapist’ < *fisioterapeuta*. Clearly, they are essentially motivated by the economy of language, and the visibility of their truncation process is a common feature.

The same procedure is observed in fore-clippings, in which prefixes and combining forms are particularly truncated (*bus* < *omnibus*, *gram* < *telegram*). This seemingly logical abbreviation pattern is disrupted in examples in which the prefix is maintained, and not the base it is attached to: *mini* (< *miniskirt*). This time, the prefix *mini-* is necessarily kept, as opposed to the base *-skirt* to avoid ambiguity with its hypernym *skirt*. Other examples in English and Spanish are: *bi* < *bisexual*, *hetero* < *heterosexual*, *heli*⁵ < *helicopter* (En.); *híper* ‘hypermarket’ < *hipermercado*, *cíber* ‘cybercafé’ < *cibercafé* (Sp.). In other words, these prefixed elements convey a hyponymic (or specifying) value, which are referentially relevant to distinguish them from their corresponding hypernym (or general) bases, namely *sexual*, *mercado*, *café*. Occasionally, these combining forms cannot avoid the process of homonymic extension: *sub* is short for *submarine*, *substitute* (teacher) and *subway*, in English.

Phonologically speaking, stressed syllables and phonological combinability are determining factors. The former illustrates the relevance of word stress in English word formation, whereby unstressed sounds tend to be obscured or omitted. This is clearly explained through the psychological impact of stress in vocabulary acquisition, i.e. words are typically associated or tagged with their stressed syllables. A latent association from phonological resemblance would

⁴ This concept was first coined by Sunden (1904, 176), and it was intended to distinguish the capacity of certain syllables to escape elliptical reduction and to be morphologically changed.

⁵ The word *heli* might be seen as a ‘splinter’, rather than a clipping, owing to the number of examples found: *heliport*, *helipad*. But if we take into account that splinters do not function as full words, e.g. *-aholic* (Allan, 2009), it is understandable to consider *heli* a clipping.

explain how the clipped form is a reminder, in our consciousness, of the full word (Sunden 1904, 178). Naturally, these processes explain why there exist a great number of abbreviated units of this type in English: *glad* < *gladiolus*, *Heb* < *Hebrew*. As expected, many of these words are back-clipped units as their first syllables are usually stressed; occasionally, initial unstressed syllables are omitted: *broolly* < *umbrella*. The omission of such syllables might necessarily determine a variation of the phonological transcriptions of abbreviated forms: *Heb* /hɛb/ < *Hebrew* /hi:-/, *vegan* /vi:-/ < *vegetarian* /vɛ:-/. Yet, there are cases in which the phonological features of full words are invariable: *veg* /vɛdʒ/ < *vegetable* /vɛdʒ-/, *condit* /-dɪʃ/ < *condition* /-dɪʃən/. These two examples (*veg* and *condit*) demonstrate the complexity of phonological variability as their corresponding compatible consonant sounds (/g/ for *veg* and /t/ for *condit*) are replaced by their original ones. This also shows that clipping reflects a general tendency to keep their phonological transparency, whereby the idea of identifying the full word through morphological visibility is reinforced.

A clear example to show the alternation between this phonological variability is the English doublet *frig/fridge*. The phonemically compliant *fridge* /frɪdʒ/ denotes a great deal of linguistic standardization whereas *frig* /frɪg/ results from the phonological accommodation of the new orthographic features. This variability does not affect their textual function as synonyms:

While you'll miss your uncle you also need a *frig* so you decide not to get a second job or save for a replacement *frig*, you decide to wait until your uncle dies and you'll use your inheritance to buy the new *fridge* (The Bismarck Tribune, September 24, 2015).

In Spanish, the most attention-grabbing phonological feature is word stress: *fácul* or *facu* < *facultad* 'faculty', *repe* < *repetido* 'repeated'. The syllabic shortening leads to stress permutation: from the last syllable in full words to the first syllable in clipped ones. Occasionally, this phonological variation is also accompanied with graphemic changes. If a consonant cluster (-*lt-* as in *facultad*) is broken, the ending consonant of the syllable is kept if it conforms to Spanish norms (Feliú Arquiola 2009, 78).

The phonological combinability pattern refers to the unlikelihood of some monosyllables becoming independent words, probably due to their constituent phonemes and graphemic incompatibility to affixation. This explains why some stressed syllables attested in English are deleted in irregular clipping processes: *lat* < *latrine*, *looy* < *lieutenant*, *Etta* < *Henrietta*, *Zena* < *Thomasina*. These examples also share a process of semantic disambiguation, in which stressed syllables would create existing English words. Thus, *trine*, *tenant*, *Henri* and *Thomas* would certainly acquire new senses, triggering a highly complex process of clipping and homonymy. This clearly suggests that monosyllabic shortened words are prone to

creating homonymic units, e.g. *mike* (< *microphone*, *Michael*), *nap* (< *Napoleon*, *catnap*).

The issues of homonymy and clipping are not limited to English and its monosyllabic tendency. In Spanish, there are also a number of cases showing the existence of two types of signifier-related homonymic relations: (1) the new clipped signifier is inexistent in the language, and (2) the new clipped word already exists in the language. The former makes reference to a nonexistent polysemic word in Spanish: *compa* ‘mate’ < *compadre*, *compañero*; *cole* ‘ensemble’ or ‘school’ < *colectivo*, *colegio*. The latter is characterized by the presence of certain words in Spanish, which have naturally become homographs with shortened units, entailing a complex homonymic structure: *cono* (< *conocimiento del medio* ‘natural science’) also means ‘cone’ as in ‘type of geometrical figure’; *trigo* (< *trigonometría* ‘trigonometry’) also means ‘wheat’. The semantic extension of clipped words might occur after the abbreviated unit is coined: *chacha* (< *muchacha* ‘girl’) is also used for a ‘house cleaner’, denoting a clear transference of semantic traits (cf. Alvar Ezquerra/Miró Domínguez 1983). Its masculine form *chacho* (< *muchacho* ‘boy’) is only kept in colloquial Spanish, as a vocative (DLE23).

4.2 Graphemic and phonological variation

The position of clipping within the word has a morphological impact on the graphemic and morphological variations of the abbreviated units. The changes undergone by letters and sounds in clipped words are necessarily interconnected in English.

The most outstanding vowel changes are related to monosyllabism and stress shift, in particular from unstressed syllables to stressed ones, i.e. from word constituent to independent word: *latrine* /læ-/ > *lat* /læt/, *lieutenant* /læ-/ > *looey* /lui:/ (cf. Antoine 2000). The change of vowel length is obviously dependent on word stress in English, and monosyllabic words call for a modification of short vowels. Another factor determining vowel change is regional differences: the shortened form *lab* < *laboratory* is known for being consistent with its full word in American English (/æ/) whereas in British English it does undergo a phonological transition from short to long vowel (*laboratory* /ə/ > *lab* /æ /).

As opposed to English, clipped words in Spanish are predominantly disyllabic: *bici* ‘bike’ (< *bicicleta*), *insti* ‘high-school’ (< *instituto*), *ofi* ‘office’ (< *oficina*), *pandi* ‘gang’ (< *pandilla*). Monosyllabic (*cha* ‘boy’ < *chaval*) or trisyllabic (*gasofa* ‘gasoline’ < *gasolina*) words are less frequent, and usually their senses are conditioned by semantic marginalization or jargoning (Fábregas Arquiola 2014, 120).

One of the most visible, and probably disruptive, examples of phonological variation in English clipping has to do with hypocoristic or pet names, in which there exists a switching between vowels /æ/ and /ɑ/. As to English phonology, the former is never seen in syllables ended by /ɪ/: *map* /mæp/, *rat* /ræt/. Instead, /ɑ/ sound is inserted: *car* /kɑr/, *hard* /hɑrd/. However, this rule is not followed when the abbreviation of a proper name occurs: *Harry* /hæri/, *Sara* /særə/ > *Har* /hær/, *Sar* /sær/ (cf. Benua 1995). This suggests that the disruption of phonological rules in English is justified by the continuity of referential values. An alteration of these phonemes in the signifier might bring about changes in the familiarity nuances of these words. Stated differently, *Har* and *Sar* are merely hypocoristic forms, particularly motivated by endearment and affection.

Spanish vowel variations are less frequent, probably due to its less varied phonological system, in which vowels are more limited, and their obscuring or reduction process is inexistent. However, some vocalic endings are changed: *sado* ‘sodomasochist’ < *sadomasoquista*, *pringui*⁶ ‘unfortunate’ < *pringado(a)*, *compí* ‘mate’ < *compañero(a)* (DLE23). In the case of *pringui* and *compí*⁷, final vowel *a* is changed into *i*, conveying an expressive function of hilarity and fondness respectively; whereas *sado* is probably the product of affixation, in which suffix *-o* is attached to the clipped adjectival base to form a noun. This suffix might result from its rhyming paronym *maso* as in *sadomaso*.

Words like *pringui* or *compí* might show a parallel patterning of *-i* ending words in *Caló*⁸ *piri* ‘food’, *baji* ‘luck’, *cangui* ‘fear’, *chini* ‘gun’ (Fuentes Cañizares 2008, 54). This ending might be structurally linked to *Caló* nominal derivation, and the marginal restriction of noun-forming suffixes *-in*, *-i*, *-ní* (cf. Krinková 2015). Interestingly, English *-ie* (or its allomorphs *-y*, *-ee*) are thought to be productive in contemporary English, e.g. *weepee*, *commie*, *punkie/punky*, *booty/bootie* (cf. Cannon 1987). Some authors claim that its oft-quoted productivity is merely restricted to specific domains, i.e. children’s talk, hypocoristic names, etc. (Bauer et al. 2015). Without embarking on an etymological quest, this homophone suffixation mechanism seems to be an effective clipped-noun-forming and slang-marker in both English and Spanish.

6 It is also found as a noun: “Y si no estás al tanto de la prima de riesgo o la bolsa, si no hablas de dinero eres un *pringui*” (Abc, August 16, 2012).

7 The word *compí* and *compa* are not necessarily exchangeable in Spanish. Although they are at times seen as synonyms in youth sociolects, *compa* denotes a more permanent quality, and a sense of sympathy and closeness whilst *compí* reveals a more temporary bonding, which is used in leisure, and even illegal (cf. Ramoncín 1993), activities.

8 One of the variants of Romany in southwestern Europe, especially in Spain, France and Portugal.

Casado Velarde (1999) also refers to the question of the grapheme *-i* in ending position in clipped words. The influence of these types of suffixed reductions might be owing to sound symbolism or expressiveness, or even the impact of English, particularly hypocoristic forms (*Mary, Betty, Joey*), on the resulting truncated forms (5079).

Coincidentally, Spanish consonantal variation is not as acute as the English one. Those changes recorded are related to necessary spelling rules in the language to conform with phonological consistency: *anarco* < *anarquista*, *pringui* < *pringado(a)*. The other type of variation concerns syllable stress, and the corresponding use of a ‘tilde’. Evidently, a syllabic reduction implies a re-arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in Spanish words, and the placement of tilde is a morphological outcome: *ciber* < *cibercafé*, *estéreo* < *estereofónico*, *súper* < *supermercado*. Although some abbreviated words are only used in oral speech, the tilde is not usually found; yet, the new clipped word is easily discernible from near homographs, already existing in Spanish: *segun* ‘second’ < *segundo(a)* and *según* ‘according to’.

Consonant variations are easy to distinguish in English clusters. Monosyllabic words are expected to double the last consonant in the abbreviated form, especially after suffixes are attached: *navvy* < *navigator*, *nappy* < *napkin*. Occasionally, when the deleted form is a suffix, the opposite process occurs: *nig* < *nigger*.

Certain graphemes in English abbreviated forms are entirely changed due to phonological accommodation: *passy* < *pacifier*. The orthographic change (*ss* < *c*) is owing to phonological accommodation. A double consonant cluster is appended to preserve the preceding short vowel, as seen in the full form (*pacifier*). Sometimes the neutralization of voiced /z/ is observed: *sample* < *example*. Despite the homonymic nature of *sample* in the system, the avoidance of /z/ sibilant in the initial position is palpable. In the case of *biz* (< *business*), there has not been any mechanism of phonological variation but rather an accord of voiced sibilant /z/ with its natural grapheme *z*. This is also a repeated pattern in present day regular plural forms in English (*boyz, newz*), intended to convey nuances of creativeness and modernity. This process is technically referred to in the literature as “phonetic spelling” and is a well-known feature of slang word stock.

Borrowed words generally undergo a process of anglicization, which affects the morpho-graphemic features of certain abbreviations: *noovo* < *nouveau riche*. These alterations are phonology-motivated, and their resulting constructs show rather anglicized spelling. These oft-quoted “remotivations” are particularly common in certain slangy expressions, whose etyma are of foreign nature and their native bases are obviously humor-driven: *hasty bananas* ‘bye’ < *hasta mañana* (from Spanish), *silver plate* ‘please’ < *s’il vous plaît* (from French) (Eble 1996, 79).

By and large, orthographic variations are dependent on phonological accommodation, which results in an array of graphemic patterns. These arrangements might conform to the existence of near homographs in the system: *libe* /laɪb/ < *library* and *lib* /lɪb/ < *liberation*. Both abbreviated monosyllabic constructs are differentiated through their original pronunciation, which explains why *libe* is spelt out with a final vowel. The addition of suffixes, as commented earlier, entails necessary spelling alterations in the clipped word, especially when hypocoristic suffixes *-y* or *-ie* are attached to the clipped base: *telly* < *television*, *libbie* < *liberationist*, *ciggie* < *cigarette* (Veisbergs 1999, 153–163).

Clipping in English also denotes an efficient source of graphemic reduction without altering the original pronunciation of complete words. This suggests that slangy formulas such as *luv* < *love*, *hun*⁹ < *honey* are merely orthographic reductions, and not necessarily clipping or truncation:

I'm not entirely sure when “babe” became the new “darling” – possibly around the same time as “*hun*” became the new “mate” (The Evening Standard, June 2, 2016).

What is this, a scene from some sordid new Oedipal TV soap opera? Hardly. It's an innocent scene from an essentially, and beguilingly, innocent film: “Growing Up Brady” (NBC's *Brady*: “*Luv*” *Ya a Bunch*, The Washington Post, May 20, 2000).

These patterns are occasionally replicated in English, whereby “unnecessary” or “vague” graphemes are deleted from original words: *hanky* < *handkerchief*, *dub* < *double*. Unlike the examples of *luv* and *cos* (< *because*), these abbreviated forms result from two processes: clipping and graphemic reduction. The latter is noticed through the keeping of the pronunciation transcription of clipped words, and the omission of certain unnecessary graphemes: *hanky* /hæŋ-/ < *handkerchief* /hæŋ-/ (letter *d* is deleted); *dub* /dʌb/ < *double* /dʌb-/.

An interesting notion in clipping concerns the realization of syntactic ellipsis, which denotes the reduction of certain parts of an utterance into shorter phrases (sometimes one-word constructs are possible). This is particularly useful in marginal speech and slang language: *s'up?* < *what's up?*, *gotcha* < *I got you*, *kinda* < *kind of*, *outta* < *out of* (Dalzell/Victor 2013). In English texts, some lexical clippings have been historically marked by the use of apostrophes: *'bout* < *about*, *fixin'* < *fixing*.¹⁰ In Spanish, this phenomenon of syntactic reduction or ellipsis is particu-

⁹ Interestingly, the abbreviated word *hun* is homonymic to *Hun* ‘a member of a nomadic Asian people’, which is usually capitalized.

¹⁰ In *fixin'* (< *fixing*), the graphic omission is a reflection of phonological variation /n/ < /ŋ/ and sociolect.

larly current: *joputa* ‘son of a bitch’ < *hijo de puta*; *porsi* ‘just in case’ < *por si acaso*; *porfa*, *porfi*, *porfaplis*¹¹ < *por favor*. The accommodation of elliptical units in Spanish reveals a tendency to one-word lexicalization, whereby bases are re-arranged and fused into a one-base construct.

5 Grammatical variation

A general notion on English and Spanish clipped words or elliptical phrases is their stereotyped predisposition to maintain the grammatical category of the full words they are derived from: *cell* < *cell phone*, *telly* < *television*, *to confab* < *to confabulate*, *consti* < *constipated* (En.); *cam* < *web cam*, *dipu* < *diputación*, *depre* < *deprimido* (Sp.). This suggests a parallelism of clipped words and their etyma in terms of grammatical and syntactical categories.

Nevertheless, most of the clipped words identified in both English and Spanish are nouns, which implies that gender and number are the most common inflectional irregularities shown by shortened nouns or nominal phrases. The second word type which is of importance is adjectives. As expected, English adjectival clipped units do not show any kind of number inflection. The following sections are intended to provide an in-depth descriptive analysis of how these variations occur, and their corresponding illustrations in English and Spanish.

5.1 Number variation

5.1.1 Singular clipped word with plural graphemes

These singular words ending in *-s* are interpreted as plural. These ending graphemes (*-s*, *-es*) are not really suffixes, they result from a clipping or elliptical process, and their usage might lead to syntactic incongruence or ungrammaticality: “[...] the rear end of that *Rolls* is a Volkswagen” (Times, October 9, 1972). The compound *Rolls Royce* has been shortened, and its clipped word *Rolls* retains the grapheme *-s*, interpreted as the plural grapheme *-s*.

Interestingly, this irregularity is also kept in the plural form of *Rolls*. In conjunction with plural rules in English, nouns ending in *-s*, *-sh*, *-ch*, or *-z* require

¹¹ This is rather a case of clipping and compounding, whereby an adapted borrowing (*plis* < En. *please*) is attached to the clipped base *porfa*-.

inflectional suffix *-es*. Thus, *Rolls* is expected to be *Rolls* or *Rollses*. Instead, it remains invariable in both singular and plural:

“The English sit in their *Rolls* drinking their tea, because they say the restaurant is too dear”
(*The worst of friends*, Evening Standard, October 29, 1973, p.21)

This type of variation is not novel in English. In her article *Clipped Words* (1914), Elizabeth Wittmann identifies some of these irregularities as “curtailments” in contemporary English: *lobs* < *lobster*, *Phillies* < *Philadelphia National League Baseball Club*, *Middies* < *Midland Railway Ordinary Stock*. In the case of singular nouns *Phillies* and *Middies*, their spelling changes are rule-abiding (*Philly-Phillies*, *Middy-Middies*) and their variation is semantically justified as their corresponding singular units are also clipped words conveying different senses: *Philly* < *Philadelphia*, *middy* < *midshipman*. The word *lobs*, like *Rolls*, is the product of lexical truncation, and its final *-s* adds a certain degree of ungrammaticality to its apparently plural form. Other examples such as *turps* < *turpentine*, *lacks* < *lacrosse*, *nobs* < *nobility* reflect no coherent consistency in the formation of singular clipped words with ending *-s*, as opposed to grammatically-compliant units *avs* ‘likelihood’ < *averages*, or *civvies* ‘civilian clothes’ < *civilians* (Spears 1991), which are clearly characterized by extrapolating the plural trait of the corresponding full words.

This graphemic adaptation might also affect the spelling and syntax of adjectives as well: *nukes* < *nuclear bombs*, *pecs* < *pectoral muscles*. These examples show a great deal of word-building complexity. The adjectives *nuclear* and *pectoral* undergo a process of functional shift and clipping, entailing a nominalization of the clipped forms *nuke* and *pec*, and their consequent inflectional suffixation.

This type of irregularity is also observed in Spanish, in which these clipped words or elliptical expressions seem to be especially productive in proper names: print periodicals (*el Informaciones* < *el Diario Informaciones*, *la Corres* < *la Correspondencia de España*), car models (*un Seiscientos* < *un coche Seicientos*, *un Mildoscientos* < *un coche Mildoscientos*).¹²

5.1.2 Plural clipped word with singular graphemes

This type of clipping is characterized by the opposite process, in which a shortened unit is seemingly singular but it is syntactically and grammatically plural.

¹² These examples are taken from Rodríguez González (1977).

This form of incongruence is especially misleading to non-native speakers of a language. A widely-known example is *pix* (< *pictures*). This form contrasts with its near paronym *pics*. They possess the same referential value but their morphological structures are particularly variable. The latter complies with the number inflection of English plurals (*pic-pics*) whereas the former (*pix*) is solely used in plural form: “Both of those *pix* have run into censorship or protest trouble” (*One way to get by censor*, The Billboard, February 13, 1954). Therefore, the systemic pairing of *pic/pix* for singular and plural forms respectively is also replicated in other examples in English: *exec* < *executive*, *exex* < *executives*.

These English clipped words reveal the concealed nature of plural inflection in the cases of *pix* and *exex*. Plurality is found when the words are described phonetically, which leads to the same plural inflection and two signifiers: one morphologically spelt out and the other one phonetically transcribed.

A parallel word-building pattern is also visible in other English units: nouns that have not undergone any shortening process but their plural forms have been graphemically adapted. In the cases of *small-pox* and *chicken-pox*, the word *pox* has lost association with plural and has become an uncountable noun to denote the disease. This metonymic permeability comes from the countable noun *pock*, which is used in plural to make reference to skin rashes (*pocks*). The *pox/pocks* variation is not intended to exemplify the use of plural forms in clipped words, but to show how English lexical patterns can be extrapolated to shortened or elliptical units. Another example is *sox* (plural form of *sock*), whose spelling complies with the aforementioned pattern (Schibsbye 1965, 94), and which is used in publicity and trade labelling as an eye-catching device, e.g. *bobby-sox*, *Boston Red Sox* (‘American baseball team’). The combination of word shortening and readability adds a great deal of trendiness and modernity, essential notions in the domains of marketing and advertising.

Interestingly, this pattern has also been exported to Spanish, but in particular cases like *comix* ‘comics’ < *comic books*. This clipped loanword is currently used in singular and plural form, only in the jargon of comic books. Its singular form, irrespective of its phonological transcription, is a replica of *pox*, *sox*, *pix*, *exex*, still inexistent in Spanish.

In Spanish, there are also plural clipped words with singular morphology: *las mate* < *las matemáticas*, *las natu* < *ciencias naturales*, *los macro* < *macro supermercados* ‘wholesale facilities’, *los hiper* < *los hipermercados*.

Unlike English, this type of variation is also palpable in Spanish adjectives as in *porno* < *pornográfico*: “[...] los barrios porno de Copenhague” (*Crónicas de Madrid, Los Turistas*, Norte de Castilla, June 17, 1973). Other less frequent examples have also been recorded: *provo* < *provocativo(-a)*, *reprei* < *reprimido(-a)* (Rainer 1993, 698). The latter examples are of interesting nature because they have only

been found in slangy student speech, and they cause easy-to-spot ungrammaticality.

Interestingly, some Spanish clipped adjectives are unvarying in plural and singular, especially those ending in *-o*: *provo*, *porno* as in *las pelis provo* or *las chicas provo*. This stereotyped pattern is also extended to other words' endings as in *anticapi*, *depre*, which reinforces the notion that clipping is tightly linked to number-related ungrammaticality. Yet, the noun *anticapi* is also seen in plural form, entailing a contextual coexistence between the ungrammatical and the inflected lemmas:

“Como candidato a seguir siendo secretario general, yo le digo al errejonista ‘qué razón tienes cuando hablas de los que faltan’”, afirma Iglesias. “Y le digo a los *anticapi* -añade a continuación- que ‘fuisteis los únicos que jamás os olvidasteis de que además de partido hay que ser movimiento’” (Sur, December 14, 2016).

La organización fue clave en la primera expansión de Podemos, en 2014. Y la memoria de los fundadores vincula el mismo nombre de la formación al eurodiputado Miguel Urbán, principal cara visible de los *anticapis* (El País, November 12, 2016).

5.2 Other irregular plural forms

In keeping with the phonological procedures commented earlier (*pix*, *exex*), there exist other ungrammatical plural clipped words that are also worth looking at: *poly*, whose plural is *polys* (< *polytechnic college*). The general English rules for spelling requires that *poly* should be pluralized as *polies*, not *polys*. This suggests that the nominalized prefix *poly-* is inclined to accept inflection *-s* to create the plural form, without undergoing any sort of spelling transformation (*ie* < *y*).

Albeit its exceptional nature, this example indicates the tendency of clipped words to comply with a standardization process, whereby a plural-building rule is applied irrespective of the spelling, phonological or morphological traits of the etyma. Thus, the use of inflectional suffix *-s* to form plural shortened words is a general tenet. Likewise, a number of English clipped words ending in *f*, as expected in English neologisms, do not show any phonological variation of the voiceless fricative phoneme /f/: *profs* < *professors*.

In conjunction with this regularization mechanism of plural forms, all the plural words ending in *-o* are inflected with plural suffix *-s*, and not *-es* as in *negroes*, *heroes*, etc. This finding demonstrates that standardization is also applied to other inflectional suffixes. The number of clipped words of this type of suffixed plurals is relevant: *auto*, *combo*, *disco*, *expo*, *hippo*, *hypo*, *info*, *lemo*, *limo*, *loco*, *memo*, *photo*, *radio*, *rhino*, etc.

5.3 Gender variation

5.3.1 Gender variation in Spanish clipped words

This type of gender variation only affects Spanish nouns and adjectives since these English lexical units are evidently based on biological gender. Grammatical gender transformation is especially visible in a number of Spanish adjectives and nouns, whose shortened constructs are morphologically masculine, but their gender agreement is feminine. This ungrammaticality is again caused by a psychological association of grapheme *o* with masculine gender, and the feminine gender of their corresponding etyma: *la moto* ‘motorcycle’ < *la motocicleta*, *la foto* ‘photograph’ < *la fotografía*; or in eponyms as in *la Teo* < *la Teófila*, *la Filo* < *la Filomena*. Sometimes, the truncation of proper names is owing to syntactic ellipsis as in *la Rocío* (< *María del Rocío*), *la Consuelo* (< *María Consuelo*).

Some clipped adjectives are also found to be traditionally masculine: *porno* ‘porn’ < *pornográfico(a)*, *provo* ‘provocative’ < *provocativo(a)*, but the truth is that they are also used with feminine nouns: *la peli porno* ‘porn movie’. At times, when the ending of clipped words is not frequent in Spanish, the tendency is to standardize the process by attaching compliant desinences as in *anarco* ‘anarchist’ < *anarquista*, *plumas* ‘down jacket’ < *plumífero*. Thus, the morphological accommodation of truncated words resorts to inflectional morphemes as to retain grammatical categories of full words (Varela Ortega 2005, 91s.).

Likewise, it is common to find a great number of masculine-looking nouns in subjects and university degrees, e.g. *la bio* ‘Biology’ < *Biología*, *la zoo* ‘Zoology’ < *Zoología*, *la geo* ‘Geography’ < *Geografía*. A widely-known word of this type is *expo* (< *exposición*), whose shortened morphological features and high combinability are responsible for its rather productive nature in compounds: *expo-moda*, *expo-juventud*, *Expo Universal*.

Interestingly, words such as *porno* (from English *pornographic*) or *retro* (from French *rétrograde*) might result from assimilated foreign clipped words. This borrowing process is referentially significant as their referents are unknown in Spanish. Their abbreviated constructs conform with both masculine and feminine units in the target language, driven by an interlinguistic replication of gender-less and number-less patterns in English.

This gender standardization of clipping patterns is also observed in words whose means of construction are highly similar: *go-gó* < *go-go boy*, *go-gó* < *go-go girl*. Thus, *go-gó* is used in Spanish for both male and female dancers, which might resolve the issue of semantic redundancy; yet it might turn out to be grammatically or morphologically incongruent.

Gender standardization is necessarily related with lexical ambiguity, especially in Spanish: *go-gó* and *ex* are expected to refer to either gender. Therefore, co-text is necessary to disambiguate the grammar gender of these words in a given utterance.

One of the most frequent morphological traits of Spanish clipped words is their resorting to more “neutral” vowels, which are not necessarily related to masculine or feminine gender. The most typical one is *-e*: *el dire* ‘principal’ (< *el director*), *la dire* (< *la directora*), *el profe* ‘teacher’ (< *el profesor*), *la profe* (< *la profesora*), as well as the adjectives *progre* ‘progressive or forward looking’ (< *progresista*), *peque* ‘little’ (< *pequeño*, *pequeña*), *repe* ‘repeated’ (< *repetido*, *repetida*), etc. Besides, there are also examples with vowel *-i*: *poli* ‘police officer’ < *policía*, *mili* ‘military service’ < *militar*, *torti* ‘lesbian’ < *tortillera*, *vampi* ‘femme fatale’ < *vampiresa*. All these abbreviated words convey rather negative or pejorative meanings.

It is also possible to stumble upon masculine words ending in *-a*, as a result of a morphological truncation of the full word (or compound): *el guardia* ‘security guard’ < *guardia de seguridad*, *el limpia* ‘shoe-shining’ < *el limpiabotas*, *el busca* ‘pager’ < *el buscapersonas*. These examples have their elliptical construction in common, i.e. some lexical bases or units have been clipped, not necessarily random graphemes as seen above.

Clipping is thus associated with the loss of gender in many abbreviated nouns, simply because their resulting bases do not accept gender inflectional suffixes. This irregularity brings about a great deal of semantic ambiguity, which is only aided by other syntactic means such as adjectival modification or the use of articles: *el fonta/la fonta* ‘plumber’ < *fontanero/fontanera*, *el ciruja/la ciruja* ‘a dumpster diver or a tramp’ < *cirujano(a)* (cf. Conde 2011). The word *el fonto* does not exist, which indicates a generalization of suffixed abbreviated words in Spanish. The abbreviated form *ciruja* is the result of a complex semantic transition from *cirujano(a)* ‘surgeon’, characterized by a pejoration of meaning, and thus, a source of homonymy. This derogatory meaning is motivated by the action of cutting the dumpsters’ lids.

Nevertheless, some examples in Spanish show that this gender standardization and graphemic accommodation is occasionally disrupted: *forasta* ‘stranger’ < *forastero*, *caricato* ‘caricature’ < *caricatura*, *anarco* ‘anarchist’ < *anarquista*, *correlija* ‘co-religionist’ < *correligionario* (Rainer 1993, 699), *trotsko* ‘Trotskist’ < *trotsquista* or *trotskista* (DEA). The abbreviated forms *forasta*, *caricato*, *anarco*, and *correlija* reveal a clear orthographic incomppliance with their corresponding full words. This final vowel (especially *-a* and *-o*) transposition contrasts with other consistent examples: *milico* ‘militian’ < *militar*, *Villavo* < *Villavicencio*, *masoca* ‘masochist’ < *masoquista*, *cátedro* ‘full professor’ < *catedrático*. This vowel relocation

illustrates the pragmatic motivation undergone by the resulting clipped words, in which pejoration (*anarco*, *masoca*) or slang (*milico*, *cátedro*) can have a higher impact on clipping than morpho-phonemic patterns.

This syllabic or word segmentation does not follow an intrinsic morphological formula, particularly Spanish clipped words ending in *-a*, as in *munipa* ‘local policeman’ (< *policía municipal*), *gasofa* ‘gasoline’ (< *gasolina*). Their intentionality and motivations are largely related to the permutation of marginal word-building patterns, e.g. *espeta* ‘police inspector’ (< *inspector*), *estupa* ‘narcotic’ (< *estupefaciente*) (Bosque/Demonte 1999, 5080). The shortening and ending of some clipped units might be a relevant source of homonymy as there is a change of referent, e.g. *matraca* ‘license plate number’ (< *matrícula*) also meaning ‘rattle’; *lejía* ‘legionnaire’ (< *legionario*) also meaning ‘bleach’ (cf. Casado Velarde 1989). The reformulation of these truncated words (*matraca*, *lejía*) is not entirely motivated by a marginalization process; an intentional hilarity plays a fundamental role in the formation of these words.

In Spanish, gender is also particularly connected with homonymy, which is found in examples whose variability is dependent on biological gender and etymology. In the case of *mili*, some clipped units have been attested: (a) *la mili* ‘compulsory military service’ < *la milicia*, (b) *una mili* ‘a female member of ETA’ < *militar*, (c) *un mili* ‘a male member of ETA’ < *militar*.¹³

5.3.2 Gender variation in anglicized clipped words

When clipped words are borrowed from English, the degree of grammar incongruence in both languages is palpable. One of these irregularities is precisely gender assignment in Spanish anglicisms, and the import of certain syntactic rules.

Gender assignment, like in the case of unadapted anglicisms, is a rather pattern-less phenomenon as per inanimate nouns. Borrowed animate nouns are in general sex-oriented, so irregularities are not frequent, e.g. *una* *blofera*, *un* *plomero*. In Spanish clipped anglicisms, gender inflectional suffixation is not commonly resorted to, which explains why some cases are only discernible through the context: *una barbi* ‘slim, elegant woman’ < *Barbie doll*, *un chap* ‘male prostitute’ < *chapero* (cf. Rodríguez González 2011). But gender-abiding examples are also found: *newricano*, *newricana* < *New York Puerto Rican*. Occasionally, there are no varying forms in Spanish, and the clipped word has feminine gender,

¹³ Cf. Steinhäusl (1984, 45).

but used for both female and male: *la celeb* < *celebrity*. This might have been infused by the Spanish equivalent *la celebridad*. On the other hand, some clipped loanwords have no gender inflection, and their masculine/feminine distinction is only possible through syntactic disambiguation: *el/la fan*, *ser glam*¹⁴ (< *glamorous*), *un/una diler* (< *drug dealer*).

Inanimate nouns, on the other hand, coexist with their “native” Spanish counterpart by compliantly adopting the gender of the Spanish word with which they are usually associated (*el hop* < *hip hop*, *una* (moto) *harley* < *Harley Davidson*, *la high* or *jai* < *high life*). But this should not be regarded as an inflection rule as there are examples showing a disconnection between clipped words’ gender, lexical constituents, and Spanish equivalents: *el acid* < *acid house music* (cf. Rodríguez González 2017).

This incongruence is even more attention-grabbing in cases in which both genders are accepted by speakers: *un/una after* < *after-hours*. Interestingly enough, new lexical units in the system are arbitrarily assigned with a phonologically-induced gender: *el non-stop* ‘in graffiti, a type of signature made without any drawing pauses’, *las bermudas* < *Bermuda shorts*. Graphemes *o* and *a* are, as expected, connected with masculine and feminine genders respectively.

5.4 Clipping and the use of articles

As to the use of articles, English clipped nouns generally conform with the same rules as their corresponding full words. Nevertheless, there exist some irregular cases that require further commentaries on their word-building mechanism and semantics.

Probably the most noticeable of these irregularities is *telly* (< *television*), which is regarded as syntactically peculiar: “normally the definite article is used with the shortened form but dropped when the full form is used (I saw it on television, but I saw it on the *telly*)” (Barber 1966 [1964], 90). Obviously, this anomaly could have been recurrent in the 1960s, as Barber has suggested, but recent findings reveal that this usage has varied diachronically: the *British National Corpus* (BNC) registers 148 occurrences of ‘on the telly’, 96 for ‘on telly’ and 470 for ‘on TV’ (in the period of 1980s and 1990s).

¹⁴ The abbreviated word *glam* is either a noun (< *glamour*) or an adjective (< *glamorous*) as in: “Tenemos personalidades diferentes. Ella es más glam y maneja mejor la parte internacional, yo me la llevo mejor con lo nacional. Si ella es *glam*, ¿cómo definiría su estilo?” (El Nacional, August 2, 2009). “Las mejores vestidas de la semana: ¡Con mucho *glam!*” (Entertainment Online Latino, August, 2016).

Referentially, these two shortened words refer to the same concept but they are semantically dissimilar: “I saw it on television” implies that the speaker is referring to the means of communication, which explains its uncountable nature; whereas “on the *telly*” alludes to the apparatus, especially accentuated by the attachment of suffix *-y*, entailing fondness and endearment.

This might suggest that this irregularity is actually a standardization of the use of articles with abbreviated (or complete) forms, whereby an article involves the idea of concretion, countability, peculiarity, etc. Thus, it is also possible to find the word *telly* in a number of texts in which this article-less notion of abstraction is conveyed: “It’s funny how different I look on *telly*” (*I’ve had some laughs*, The Star of Sheffield, March 9, 1974); “Blank screens on *telly* as BBC men get tough” (The Star, July 5, 1974). These examples are illustrative of how *telly* and *television* can also become near synonyms depending on the text they have been used in.

This semantic adjustment has been identified in various clipped forms, which are also characterized by the lack of the definite article: *on vac* < *on vacation*, *admin* < *administration*. Similarly, *admin* is expected to denote the administrative system rather than administration tasks, as indicated by the introduction of the article the word has been retrieved from:

“Last week’s Vehicle general report showed how *admin* can go wrong. The *administrative system* is a neglected side of politics” (*Administering Democracy*, New Society, February 24, 1972).

The lack of article in *on vac* goes along with the homonymic trait of *vac* (< *vacation*, *vacuum*). This suggests that *on the vac* is found in cases in which the clipped word is making reference to the ‘vacuum cleaner’ or ‘vacuum packaging’, as seen in the following examples:

Which is why, I am afraid, I won’t be rushing out to my nearest Lidl to stock up on *the vac-packed* kangaroo steaks that the German discounter has on special offer this week (Irish Daily Mail, September 27, 2013, 14).

Next time someone puts you on speaker phone, call waiting, turns *on the vac*, or begins twiddling with text messages between their legs, yell the new battle cry: “Stop it or you’ll go blind, you wanker” (Weekend Australian, July 30, 2005)

All in all, the omission of articles is not restricted to clipped words when a semantic variation occurs. This apparent regularity is also perceived in a number of nouns in English, whose syntactic differences are perceptible in combination with other word types such as prepositions or pre-modifying adverbs. Let us take the cases of *tech* (< *Technical college*) and *poly* (*Polytechnic college*), which might

be found in everyday English as in “to go to *tech/poly*”, as opposed to their complete stretches “to go to the technical college/the polytechnic college”. Therefore, the parallelism of *uni* (< *university*) and these two examples is clarifying. Obviously, these article-less forms are associated with the act of studying in these institutions, rather than the act of naming the buildings. This universality replicates the so-called English doublets: *the church* (the building) and *go to church* (‘to attend mass’), *the prison* (the building) and *go to prison* (‘to be condemned’), etc. This indicates that some grammar variations in clipping are extrapolated from their complete lexical units, which might confirm the assumption that some syntactic and word-building mechanisms are kept.

A distinctive feature of Spanish clipped words is that some elliptical forms are necessarily used with articles due to the syntactic shortening or ellipsis process of superlative utterances: *el masca* < *el más cabrón* ‘the most abusive’, *el masmo* < *el más moderno* ‘the most modern’ (cf. Rodríguez González 2005). They are only found in masculine gender since they are related to the jargon used in the military. The use of articles in clipped Spanish anglicisms is at times conditioned by replicated or borrowed syntactic features from English or the indigenous Spanish word, as in *ser charm* (‘to be charming’) < *tener encanto* o *ser encantador*.

6 Conclusions

The analysis of morpho-phonological variations of clipping in Spanish and English has shown the existence of an array of differences, in particular those related to gender and number categories of adjectives and nouns, e.g. biological gender, plural mark in attributive forms, etc. However, the majority of the examples converge in the classification sets proposed (see Fig. 1). This universal grouping is especially dissimilar in two aspects: English is especially more inclined to orthographical modification, usually to preserve or accommodate phonological features, whereas Spanish undergoes more significant changes in the level of grammar inflection. This is expectedly motivated by the systemic rules of both languages.

Nevertheless, the processes of homonymy and polysemy have been related to syllabic truncation in both languages. In other words, new clipped words occasionally coincide with already-existing full words. Also, elliptical truncation or omission is present in both English and Spanish clipping processes, essentially motivated by the economy of language (*air* < *air conditioning*, *aire* < *aire acondicionado*).

One of the most important findings is that English and Spanish clipped words tend to be compliant with the grammatical and morpho-phonological rules of the

corresponding full words. In particular, orthographic variations are dependent on phonological accommodation: *fridge*, *passy* (En.); *súper*, *segun* (Sp.). This suggests that despite the highly marginal features of clipped words in both languages, there is a tendency to maintain linguistic rules and patterns. Clearly, this adds more sociolinguistic complexity to word-building mechanisms in slang and colloquial word stock.

English nouns, like their Spanish paronyms, might also turn into either singular clipped words with plural graphemes or plural clipped words with singular graphemes. Albeit their coincidental plural inflection, the frequency and the typology of the examples attested lead to the notion that grammatical norm necessarily governs the consistency, or incongruence, of shortened plural units.

This process is even more complex in the case of borrowed clipped anglicisms, which result from referential or expressive motivations, and are adapted into the Spanish grammar inflection system. The resulting constructs might look native (*funero* ‘someone who does funboard’ < *fun* < *funboard*) or foreign (*after* < *after-hours*). But the fact is that these pseudo-loans are unrecognizable to English speakers, and their clipping process shows a higher degree of grammar disruption than any other elliptical form in Spanish.

In general, English and Spanish clipped words are likely to comply with the syntactic rules of their corresponding full words. This indicates that abbreviated units are morphologically stereotyped as their primary function relies on maintaining the structural visibility, or transparency, of the etyma they are derived from. As seen, and irrespective of the exceptions, grammatical and phonological rules are consistently extrapolated from full to clipped words, leading to necessary syntactic adjustments and accommodation.

7 References

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