

Of *boh*os and *froyo*: A study of ‘CloClo’ formations in contemporary English slang

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Most studies of slang and colloquial speech have been traditionally devoted to the morphological and semantic examination of neologisms and innovative lexis (Eble 1996; Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Mattiello 2008), but the motives and sociolinguistic traits underlying their formation remain unexplored. This paper is intended to delve into the morphosemantic and motivational characteristics underlying the formation of CloClo units in contemporary English slang. CloClo are disyllabic clipped composites consisting of two consonant clusters (Cl₁ + Cl₂) and having the vowel –o /ou/ as a syllable closure, e.g. *boho* < *bohemian*, *froyo* < *frozen yogurt*, *slo-mo* < *slow motion*. Earlier studies on this construction, particularly those by Gorman and Mackenzie (2009) and Gold (1999), suggest that there is morphological and phonological variation in the analysis and typology of these units, and that these types of compounds are palpable indications of trendiness and linguistic vogue. In our case, our investigation looks at the units that comply with the CloClo pattern, that is, the grapheme -o- and the diphthong /ou/, to assess if there are universal paradigms or trends that govern their coinage in English slang word stock, e.g. semantic transparency, graphemic and phonological alteration, and motivations (cf. Rodríguez and Sánchez). The research consists of two global stages: (i) data compilation and (ii) data processing. The former is intended to compile words complying with the pre-established CloClo pattern from descriptive and prescriptive dictionaries (Dalzell 2009; MWD11; OED3; Partridge 2000; Spear 1991; Thorne 2005); whilst the latter is expected to shed more light on the morphological and semantic paradigmaticity of this type of construction. Early findings suggest that although these units share morphological similarity, their semantic compositionality is highly dissimilar as it depends on the number of the input meanings of bases.

References

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