

# Degrees of Decomposability of *-ism* Nouns and Their Sanctioning Construction Schemas

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## *Abstract*

This article scrutinizes nouns with the suffix *-ism* derived from a homogeneous category of derivational bases. The influence of extralinguistic factors on the interpretation of *-ism* nouns is undeniable. Relevant examples of pragmatic motivation are presented and briefly discussed. However, it is argued here that the derivational process in question can be largely reduced thanks to local construction schemas of a dual—phonological and semantic—nature. Such templates grasp enough semantic nuance in a fairly straightforward way. The results are used to demonstrate that numerous novel and low-frequency *-ism* formations are sanctioned by construction schemas at different levels of specificity. Such schemas are readily available for other, analogical formations, without any need for superfluous specification of semantic and formal detail. The argument is made for the need to simplify sanctioning word-formation templates for certain types of suffixal patterns (abbreviated here to *namisms* and *surnamisms*). Three degrees of decomposability of *-ism* nouns and their sanctioning schemas are postulated. The observations made shed some light on our understanding of the production and subsequent use of *-ism* nouns.

Keywords: noun; nominalization; derivation; suffix(ation); *-ism*; construction schema; (de)composability; sanction; semantics; (sur)namism

## *1. Introduction*

Pragmatic factors are undoubtedly the motivation for speakers to coin new and to use already derived *-ism* nouns. It is extralinguistic factors that prompt researchers to postulate complex meanings or senses of *-ism* formations (e.g., Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013; Hamawand 2008; Hamawand 2013; Marchand 1969). Nevertheless, putting together a complex word with the suffix *-ism* basically means following a word-formation pattern which provides a speaker with sufficient necessities for this purpose.

A pattern, which will be referred to as a construction schema, is needed when construction takes place. When construction does not take place, because there is a ready-made noun available, a construction schema is not activated (at least, not as the speaker's first choice). Still, it

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is available in case it is needed. In general, the availability of both a construction schema and a ready-made instantiation can be argued for in the case of all types of morphologically complex nouns, not only those with the suffix *-ism*. Furthermore, like other derivatives, nouns in *-ism* are heterogeneous in terms of their internal texture. The internal texture here refers to degrees of (de)composability observed among different *-ism* nouns, that is to what extent such nouns are felt as solid wholes, or else, decomposable derivatives. Nouns in *-ism* provide examples of both kinds. On the one hand, nouns such as *Marxism* or *baptism* are felt as solid wholes, due to the balanced occurrences of both the base and the derived noun. On the other hand, nouns like *Bushism* or *refugeeism* are felt as if consisting of more than one element, due to the higher frequencies of the base than those of the derived noun.

The data show numerous instances of *hapax legomena* with the suffix *-ism*, which unmistakably proves the process's productivity. This, in turn, shows that there is a process to begin with, and not only—more or less—lexicalized formations. This word-formation process is structurally and semantically simple, as it relies on a continuum of more or less abstract construction schemas. No doubt, this process is also greatly facilitated by numerous already lexicalized formations, which constitute the most concrete construction schemas at the same time. It is the ease with which speakers combine the base with the suffix that leads to unrestrained production of novel formations in *-ism*. These novel formations are based on both memorized instantiations and more or less abstract construction schemas that sanction assemblage (cf. Langacker 1987; Langacker 1991).

The suffix *-ism* has been attributed “a high degree of productivity” in contemporary English (Biermeier 2009: 340), though morphological productivity itself has remained largely unexplored and elusive (Bauer 2001). The results of the synchronic research confirm the high productivity of the process involving the suffix *-ism* and personal names (Section 6). As numerous personal names (surnames) show unrestricted availability for the suffix *-ism*, possibilities of deriving relevant nominalizations seem endless. With very few high-frequency items, the majority of these derivations are infrequent or constitute once-only formations. Many are coined for one particular occasion, possibly are repeated if the right conditions are found. The fact that the suffix *-ism* readily participates in the formation of numerous *hapax legomena*

suggests, among other things, that the composite structure of a relevant nominalization is analysable to a high degree and easily transferrable to other such derivations. As it will be postulated, new formations are motivated not only by extralinguistic factors, but by construction schemas with varied degrees of abstractness. It is quite unlikely that language users process the alleged extralinguistic complexities of the suffix *-ism* implied by linguists, philosophers and political scientists, every time they put together a new formation or exploit an already lexicalized one.

The above theoretical postulate will be applied to a small fragment of the entire phenomenon of *-ism* noun formation. By minimizing the scope of data, it will be possible to focus on inevitable diversity within a homogeneous category. As for construction schemas, we rely on the tradition originally elaborated in cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987; Langacker 1991) and further developed in (radical) construction grammar (Croft 2009; Goldberg 2009; Goldberg 2011). All these approaches underline the necessity of static templates, rather than dynamic, generative word-formation rules. These schemas (templates or patterns) hold together both form and meaning at different levels of abstraction and sanction numerous instantiations elaborating and conforming to the specifics of the former.

Initially, some theoretical background concerning the word-formation process in question is set out in Section 2. Also, descriptive problems with the suffix's alleged multiple meanings are signalled there. The origins of the suffix *-ism* and its subsequent development are tracked in Section 3. Section 4 is devoted to some discussion of extralinguistic motivations involved in this word-formation process. The importance of construction schemas for word-formation processes is demonstrated in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 is devoted to specific and local construction schemas (*surnamisms*) with degrees of their (de)composability. The discussion concentrates on formations with politicians' surnames as derivational bases. The results are used to demonstrate that *-ism* formations can be handled by construction schemas at different levels of specificity. Such schemas are readily available for other, analogical formations, without any need for superfluous specification of semantic and formal detail.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The suffix *-ism* is usually invoked as one of the suffixes forming *Nomina Essendi* (NE). These are typically characterized as abstract deadjectival nominalizations, glossed as ‘quality/state of being A’, for example: *cynic(al) ~ cynicism*, *exotic ~ exoticism*, *lyric ~ lyricism*, *romantic ~ romanticism* (Szymanek 1989: 154–170). Earlier accounts, such as Marchand (1969: 244), refer to the resultant derivations of *-ism* suffixation as ‘abstract substantives’. Other nominalizations in this category bear one of the following suffixes: *-ness*, *-ity* (*-ty*, *-y*), *-(anc)y/-(enc)y*, *-(ac)y* and *-(it)ude*. Some others count as peripheral and unproductive NE types due to their opaque suffixes: *-th*, *-hood* and *-dom*.

The suffix *-ism*, like other suffixes, is a bound morpheme. These suffixes, in the words of Harris (1951: 161), ‘practically never constitute an utterance by themselves’. Moreover, *-ism* is less bound than, say, *-ceive*, which is more integrated with the base. The suffix *-ism* has earned a ‘special status’ among other affixes and it is somewhat exceptional among them (Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013: 270).

The classification of all nouns in *-ism* under one rubric of abstract deadjectival nominalizations seems to be too restrictive. Indeed, some *-ism* formations are derived from morphologically simple adjectives (e.g., *purism*, *realism*, *truism* etc.) or from morphologically complex adjectives (e.g., *Africanism*, *collectivism*, *herbalism* etc.). But others are derived from simple nominal bases (e.g., *journalism*, *symbolism*, *terrorism* etc.). Proper (personal) names constitute a special category among nominal bases (e.g., *Bushism*, *Darwinism* etc.). Many *-ism* nouns are based on morphologically complex nominal bases (e.g., *employmentism*, *refugeeism*, *tricksterism* etc.). In many cases, multiply-affixed adjectival or nominal bases are hard to identify for the average language user (e.g., *establishmentarianism*, *gigantificationism* etc.). Added to this, derivational bases constitute compound-like entities (e.g., *Anglo-Saxonism*, *bandwagonism* etc.), prefixed forms (e.g., *anti-Fascism*), phrases (e.g., *can-doism*, *do-goodism*, *not-in-my-backyardism* etc.) and possibly other complex forms.

The above classifications are undoubtedly limited. One complicating factor here is that not all *-ism* lexemes are equally decomposable (see Section 5). Formations with proper names as their bases are usually transparent, especially to those speakers who are familiar with such names. But, the recognition of the derivational base may be hindered in

some other cases by the less-than-compositional form of the composite derivation. The simplest way to overcome this difficulty is to assume that such bases tend to be bound morphemes, exclusively combining with the key suffix (e.g., *baptism*, *Judaism*, *scientism* etc.) (cf. Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013: 253–255). In the case of *solipsism*, Booij (2016: 105) proposes that ‘we recognize a suffix *-ism*, even though there is no base word *solips* in English’. The frequent and systematic use of the suffix *-ism* in many other cases allows us to recognize *solips* as the base which does not exist on its own outside this formation. It cannot be precluded though that a free morpheme base also looks obscure when the word is unknown to language users.

The suffix *-ism* also attracts the attention of scholars in social sciences mostly because of its conceptual vagueness. It is the loosely sketched concept of *ism*, rendered by the related suffix, that has become the target of interdisciplinary research in social sciences. In particular, researchers in the history of ideas deal with the multiplicity of *isms*, proliferating ‘historical discourses’ (Marjanen 2018: v). Rather than a single concept of *ism*, it is more common to refer to ‘the prominence of *ism* concepts’ which conspicuously appear both in general and specialist (scholarly) discourses, conducted in English and in other languages (Kurunmäki & Marjanen 2018: 241). In the areas of international relations theory or security studies, different *isms* have drawn researchers’ attention. Conceptual battles between proponents of either realism or culturalism and their ‘influence on state behaviour’ have spurred intensive research and provoked intellectual debates (see, e.g., Duffield et al. 1999: 159). But even though *isms* are commonly treated as predominantly political, ideological and historical issues, adding a linguistic perspective to this interdisciplinary research becomes more and more urgent. In the case of the *ism* concepts and the *-ism* suffix, the need to combine both types of research, political/ philosophical with the linguistic, is justified. Studying the concept’s rhetorical value without its linguistic aspect results in an incomplete picture of the key entity.

Earlier, mostly generative accounts have adopted the view that affixation in general ‘involves adding an empty morpheme to a full morpheme or to a larger unit containing a full morpheme’ (Langacker 1968: 77). More recent, cognitive approaches reject the semantic emptiness of any grammatical morphemes and assume some schematic meaning in affixes (see, e.g., Langacker 1987: 454; Langacker 1991: 46–

50). Still, the putative meaning of an affix has remained a debatable issue. According to Adams (2001: 53–67), nominalizations in *-ism* (as abstracts) may be problematic to interpret as they often ‘remain ambiguous’ or have ‘a single vague sense’ which does not have to be spelled out more precisely. Current research in morphology further refines the position adopted in cognitive linguistics accounts. Not only does the suffix *-ism* carry some schematic meaning, but it also ‘has a more specific meaning than the purely abstract or collective-forming affixes’ (Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013: 245). Rather than bearing one (specific) meaning, the suffix has also been claimed to possess multiple meanings (see, e.g., Hamawand 2008: 89; Hamawand 2013: 132).

Researchers agree that the key derivations evoke not only numerous connotations, but they trigger loaded or heavy connotations, such as political ideas and social concepts. Authors disagree over whether these connotations are intrinsically negative or not. Some researchers assume that the key nouns always designate undesirable entities and they never express even neutral senses (e.g., Marchand 1969: 245). Potentially positive derivations, such as *heroism* or *patriotism*, are claimed to be mere loans from French. Others tend to dispel this view by claiming that nouns in *-ism* do not have to be always negative in reception (see, e.g., Biermeier 2009: 340). In any case, the vitality of the suffix *-ism* and its exceptional rhetorical power does not appear to be up for debate.

The above section has focused on the alleged morphological, semantic and pragmatic complexity of *-ism* formations. The main idea to be taken from the above considerations is that what is needed is some descriptive simplification of the process of *-ism* derivation.

### *3. Origins of the Suffix and its Subsequent Development*

The main point of this section is to explore the formal and semantic richness of *-ism* nouns via their origins and subsequent developments. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the suffix *-ism* has been traced back to the Greek ending *-ισμός* (*-ismós*), present in Latin as *-ismus*, and appearing in French as *-isme*. Marchand (1969: 245) further classifies the suffix as ultimately Old Greek *-ismós* (sometimes *-isma*). Greek nouns in *-ισμός* are claimed to be ‘nouns of action’ (Algeo 2010: 233). Their formation follows a process of verbalization via the attachment of the suffix *-ίζειν* (e.g., *βαπτίζειν* ‘to dip, baptize’). The

relevant noun of action is *βαπτισμός* ‘the action of dipping, baptism’. However, originally Greek deverbal impersonal substantives are claimed to display a different function than that seen among modern *-ism* nouns in English (and other European languages) (see Marchand 1969: 245). It is the related suffix *-ισμα(τ-)*, expressing the perfectivity of an act, which is considered to have given rise to the modern suffix *-ism* (OED).

While ecclesiastical terminology (e.g., *christianismós* Gr.) was entering Latin (*christianismus*) through the Middle Ages, other religion-based vocabulary, such as *Calvinismus* or *Lutheranismus*, established itself in the 16th century. From that time onwards, an increasing number of *-ismus* formations were being derived in Latin. Their English, French and other European equivalents were becoming increasingly popular throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. These were mostly scientific or scholarly terms designating ‘doctrinal systems of principles’, such as *Aristotelism*, *hedonism*, *idealism*, *nominalism*, *Platonism*, *Scotism* and so on (Marchand 1969: 244). Alternatively, rather than designations of serious principles, the suffix may be added to names resulting in ‘pseudo-principles’, such as *babyism*, *fanaticism*, *hoodlumism*, *knownothingism* and such like (Marchand 1969: 245).

Traditionally, different sources list several functions that are teased out of the uses of the suffix *-ism*. According to the OED, the major functions of the suffix *-ism* are to form:

- nouns of action, e.g., *baptism*, *criticism*, *plagiarism* etc.
- nouns expressing the action or conduct of a class of persons, e.g., *despotism*, *heroism*, *patriotism* etc., or the condition of a person or thing, e.g., *barbarism*, *parallelism*, *well-to-do-ism* etc.
- names of (religious, philosophical, political, social) systems, theories, practices etc., sometimes founded on the name of its subject, object or its founder, e.g., *Calvinism*, *Epicureanism*, *Machiavellism*, *Taoism* etc.
- names or descriptive terms for doctrines or principles, e.g., *agnosticism*, *evangelism*, *fanaticism*, *paganism* etc. Journalists would use the suffix to create often jocular, compound-like nonce-formations, e.g., *anti-state-churchism*, *can't-help-myself-ism*, *19th-century-ism* etc.
- terms denoting a peculiarity or characteristic, esp. of language, e.g., *Americanism*, *Latinism*, *Scotticism*, *Southernism* etc. Also

names designating a peculiarity or characteristic of the language, style, or phraseology of a writer, speaker, character in fiction etc., e.g., *Carlylism*, *De Quinceyism*, *Montesquieuism* and many others.

- nouns with the sense ‘belief in the superiority of one over another’, e.g., *racism*, *sexism*, *speciesism* etc.
- nouns with the sense ‘discrimination or prejudice against on the basis of’, e.g., *ageism*, *heightism*, *faceism*, *sizeism*, *weightism* etc.

To this, Marchand adds cases in which suffixed forms designate ‘abnormal conditions’ used in medical contexts, such as *alcoholism* and others (Marchand 1969: 245). Recently, more abstract and detailed semantic designations of *-ism* nouns have been added, for example: kinds of speech (e.g., *abnegationism*) or scientific (or pseudo-scientific or mock scientific) fields of study (e.g., *biologicalism*) (Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013: 253–254).

Not only the suffix *-ism*, but also the noun *ism* with its etymology has been outlined in the OED. The noun *ism* (pl. *isms*) is in current use, designating ‘a form of doctrine, theory, or practice having, or claiming to have, a distinctive character or relation; chiefly used disparagingly’. The full autonomy of the noun *ism(s)* can however be questioned, as it tends to appear in the company of one or more other *-ism* formations. Nevertheless, solo appearances of the noun *ism(s)* can also be found within a sentence.

#### 4. *Extralinguistic Motivations over Decades*

Historical developments of *-ism* nouns can be traced, to some extent, on the basis of data obtained from the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) (<https://corpus.byu.edu/coha/>) (Davies 2010–). Basic quantitative tendencies of such nouns can be fairly easily established in a time frame from 1810 to 2009, divided into decades. The raw frequencies of *-ism* nouns under the ‘list’ option were obtained on 7 October 2018. The search item was the simple string *\*ism*.

Raw frequencies across *-ism* nouns differ markedly. The most frequently used word type with the suffix *-ism* is *criticism* with 13,510 tokens (i.e., occurrences in which *criticism* has been recorded in COHA). The second most frequent noun is *patriotism* with 4,931 tokens. After

that, token frequencies fall rather rapidly. *Materialism*, as type no. 32, has 1,054 tokens. *Modernism* (no. 57) has 508 tokens. *Automatism* (no. 194) has, by comparison with the above, as few as 100 tokens. One-digit tokens begin with *ultraconservatism* (no. 637). The type *polymerism* closes the 1-to-1000 list, exemplified with as few as 4 tokens. Among 1,700 types obtained in the search, as many as 63% carry between one and nine tokens each. Another 26% of the types examined are represented by tokens with frequencies between 10 and 99. It is only about 11% of all types that have 100 and more tokens. Though not submitted to further scrutiny, types between 1,001 and 1,700 have been briefly looked at. From *polygenism* (no. 1,001) to *shiism* (no. 1,029), the numbers of tokens are 4 each. Between *shinto-ism* (no. 1,030) and *monoculturalism* (no. 1,211), each type has 3 tokens. From *monometalism* (no. 1,212) to *shamateurism* (no. 1,639), all types display two tokens each. Finally, between *shandy-ism* (no. 1,640) and *solitaryheroism* (no. 1,700), each type is recorded once only. The list of hapax legomena goes on beyond the 1,700 cut-off point. Tokens with low-frequencies and *hapax legomena* are indicative of high morphological productivity (Baayen 1989; Baayen & Renouf 1996; Hay & Baayen 2002; Plag, Dalton-Puffer & Baayen 1999). However, in this analysis, once-only words have not been further examined due to exceedingly dispersed large numbers of data.

One conspicuous effect observed across the data is a tendency to decrease frequencies of use over the decades. Most word types evidently decrease their occurrences or disappear altogether towards the year 2000. A total of 90–94% drop in overall token frequency has been observed. Furthermore, the complete disappearance of 53% of all word types around the year 2000 has been noted. The following regular pattern emerges: the word types with the lowest frequencies are particularly prone to rapid demise. If a particular word type no longer attracts the attention of language users, it goes out of use and terminates its course. Presumably, higher frequency types are less susceptible to total loss because their frequencies buoy them for uptake among speakers from generation to generation.

Some types do not disappear, but even increase their frequencies around the year 2000. The numbers of such types are not high. They are typically between 4% and 10% of all word types. This increase in or continuation of use at the same level is motivated by all kinds of

pragmatic factors which keep a given noun constantly in need of conveying valid concepts. These pragmatic motivations are changeable and mostly unpredictable. New motivations appear every now and then, triggered by conspicuous individuals, events or phenomena.

There are a few cases in which a noun is active for some decades in the past, disappears and then re-appears again shortly before, in or soon after 2000. Take, for instance, *islamism* and *shintoism*. The former was mildly active between 1940 and 1950. Then it disappeared for forty years and returned in 1990 (12 tokens) and 2000 (5 tokens). The latter was seldom used between 1890 and 1910 as well as in 1940. After an absence of forty years it resurfaced in 1990 (2 tokens) and 2000 (1 token). Nouns in *-ism* that make a sudden appearance or a sharp increase before or in 2000 are relatively infrequent in COHA. These are, for example (ordered according to their word type number): *multiculturalism*, *creationism*, *postmodernism*, *ecotourism*, *wahhabism*, *globalism*, *mentalism*, *exceptionalism*, *consequentialism*, *dialogism*, *heterosexism*, *judgementalism*, *cognitivism* and *jihadism*. They cluster around a few overarching themes. Once speakers judge a certain phenomenon as worth naming, the derivation of a relevant *-ism* noun is motivated. Finally, there are several types which have retained the same number of occurrences in 2000 as the preceding record of more than 0. Such cases are relatively rare.

##### 5. *Construction Schemas*

Factors motivating speakers to derive and use certain derivations at a given point in time lose their force or vanish at a later stage. As a result, speakers lose interest in using irrelevant nouns. Or else, extralinguistic factors do not wane and continue to prompt speakers to use still relevant nouns. Special conditions may trigger the rise of a specific category of names representing a dominant theme. Word types such as *counterterrorism*, *antiterrorism*, *bioterrorism*, *cyberterrorism* etc. illustrate such a specific category consisting of terms designating security issues and contemporary threats which appeared in the 1980s and were magnified through the 1990s and the 2000s. The currency of these issues and the proliferation of the relevant terminology is reflected in alternate spelling variants (see COHA). Without doubt, extralinguistic motivations steer changing frequencies, as seen above.

However, the resultant nouns in *-ism* are regularly assembled from smaller components according to some linguistic principles. Numerous low-frequency items and hapaxes are constructed, used sparsely and then discarded. Their construction is carried out according to some simple procedure which cannot—presumably—take into account the semantic complexities implied by the OED or corpus findings. It is doubtful if speakers consciously attend to diverse semantic specifics ascribed to numerous instances. The construction process, which results in so many derivations, should be formally straightforward and semantically (pragmatically) unencumbered. Pragmatic motivations are on hand to interpret novel formations, but construction schemas must be salient enough to guide the derivation process itself.

It seems that there is a very general lexico-semantic mechanism which sanctions the derivation of novel forms and the use of already existing ones. This mechanism possibly takes the form of a construction schema which integrates two or more components with a varying amount of detail (cf. Langacker 1987: 84–85). The number of morphemes potentially involved is theoretically unlimited, with two (*ageism*), three (*postmodernism*) or four (*anti-Americanism*) constituting average numbers. In such cases, the suffix *-ism* is perceived as a decomposable item as the rest of the nominalization can function on its own. A construction schema sanctioning such cases may be represented in the following way: [[NAME]-[ISM]]. The constituent [NAME] stands for what precedes the suffix, no matter how internally complex this part is (e.g., *terror* or *counterterror*). This notation roughly corresponds to the representation of the semantic pole of a category (cf. Langacker 1987; Langacker 1991). The hyphen between the two components marks the possible decomposability of the entire formation.

However, there are numerous cases where the composite whole feels less decomposable (e.g., *autism*, *communism*, *metabolism*, *neologism*, *optimism* etc.). This is due to the fact that the removal of the suffix *-ism* leaves an unattested entity. Such *-ism* nouns are interpreted by speakers as whole words rather than derivatives. The (semantic) contribution of *-ism* as a suffix is minimal here as it is fully or partially integrated with the rest of the word. Decomposability is a matter of degree and depends on the analysability of a given formation, among other factors. Analysability, in turn, is highly subjective as it is perceived by language users. Some of the above solidified formations are felt as slightly

decomposable. In such cases, the schema [[NAME][ISM]] might symbolize some minimal decomposability. Others, which are firmly solidified are better sanctioned by the schema [NAMISM], which minimizes the recognition of the derivational base.

In any case, NAME stands for (the approximation of) any concept that is worth of employing in the composite formation, frequent or infrequent. ISM designates an abstract concept whose phonological form bears much of its schematic sense. The three general schemas: [[NAME]-[ISM]], [[NAME][ISM]] and [NAMISM] significantly simplify the alleged lexico-semantic complexity imbued in numerous *-ism* nouns. Some of these nouns are perceived as derivations rather than unitary items since their bases typically appear more frequently than the suffixed forms (e.g., *cognitive* – 16,318 vs. *cognitivism* – 25; COCA, 17 July 2019) (cf. Hay & Baayen 2002). The idea is that speakers would be more likely to parse words as composite when the base is more frequent than the derivative in a corpus. However, one should keep in mind that speaker perceptions may vary over time as frequencies and extralinguistic factors change.

#### 6. *Construction Schemas with Politicians' Surnames*

Our theoretical assumption of construction schemas will be applied to a fragment of *-ism* formations. These involve personal names as derivational bases. Personal names, also known as *anthroponyms*, form a subclass within proper names 'by which an individual is known', according to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*. Characteristic of political, economic, historical and geographic entities, proper names—more generally—are nominal categories which denote unique entities (Van Langendonck 2007: 17, 87). A unique entity represented by a proper name is an 'entity of which there is only one' (Hockett 1958: 312). In a default situation, where uniqueness is expected to be the norm, proper names also perform an identifying function. They identify persons, entities or objects, by singling them out from among similar such persons, entities or objects. Such naming can be compared to labelling whatever proper names, 'mere identification marks', are meant to identify (Ullmann 1962: 73–77). Derivations in *-ism* are based either on personal names themselves (e.g., *Marxism*, *Platonism*, *Thomism* etc.) or adjectives derived from these names (e.g., *Baconianism*, *Hegelianism*,

*Leibnitizianism* etc). There are also spelling variants, such as *Kantism/Kantianism*, *Lutherism/Lutheranism* etc. (Marchand 1969: 246). Both the suffix *-ism* and derivations with it are called epithetical in Bolinger (1968: 268).

Before we apply sanctioning construction schemas to this fragment of *-ism* derivations, let us summarize the results of the actual data retrieval process. The names obtained in this process will serve as instantiations of the construction schemas in question.

### *6.1. Results of the COCA search*

The task involved establishing a database of nominalizations based on politicians' surnames with the suffix *-ism* appended to them (Jafiszow 2017). The analysis consisted in a corpus search and manual post-editing of the results. Initially, 4,000 word types with the ending *\*ism* were retrieved from *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* (Davies 2008–). The search period covered the years 1990–2015, available at the time. Two written genres were sourced: academic and journalistic, the latter combining popular magazines and newspapers. The nominalizations obtained in this initial search included: (academic) 2,534 types with 114,903 tokens and (journalistic) 1,935 types with 96,353 tokens. These figures relate to word types with *-ism* appended to any derivational bases. Next, only *-ism* nominalizations with politicians' surnames were visually identified. As a result, 37 types (surnames) with 1,333 tokens were found in academic texts and 52 types with 861 tokens were collected in journalistic texts. Politicians' surnames constitute between 0.9–1.2% of all bases for *-ism* nominalizations obtained in both genres. So, this is indeed a fragment of the entire phenomenon of *-ism* noun formation.

The majority of *-ism* noun types used in academic texts (31/37) are also found in journalistic texts (31/52). These are:

Bonapartism, Brezhnevism, Browderism, Cameronism, Carterism, Castroism, Clintonism, Fayyadism, Francoism, Garveyism, Gaullism, Hitlerism, Jacksonianism, Jeffersonianism, Kemalism, Khomeinism, Leninism, Maoism, Marxism, McCarthyism, Mobutuism, Nasserism, Nixonism, Peronism, Putinism, Reaganism, Stalinism, Thatcherism, Titoism, Trotskyism and Wilsonianism.

The above shared nominalizations were recorded as many as 2,194 times (tokens) in all sources combined. The remaining six noun types (out of 37) found only in academic texts are:

Bourguibism, Genscherism, Kadarism, Madisonianism, Obamaism and Rooseveltism.

These were recorded 12 times (tokens). By contrast, 21 out of 52 noun types found only in journalistic texts are:

Buchananism, Bushism, Churchillism, Gingrichism, Goldwaterism, Gorbachevism, Kimism, Kingism, Lincolnism, McGovernism, Perotism, Pouladism, Romneyism, Saddamism, Schroederism, Stimsonism, Sungism, Trumpism, Wallaceism, Zhirinovskiyism and Zhivkovism.

These were recorded 51 times (tokens). The higher number of nouns (21) found only in journalistic texts may suggest that this genre offers a better habitat for novel formations than the academic genre. However, all the *-ism* noun tokens with surnames distributed across both academic and journalistic texts constitute 97% of all uses. The *-ism* nouns left to be allocated to either genre separately constitute a 3%-minority of tokens. Ascribing greater hospitality for *-ism* names to one genre only is not clearly evidenced.

Although, both genres host different numbers of tokens of particular shared types, certain quantitative similarities between shared types can also be detected. For example, the lexicalized form *Marxism* is the most frequent type in both genres, reaching 720 tokens in academic and 327 in journalistic. Other lexicalized forms show similar effects, for example, *Leninism*, *McCarthyism* or *Peronism*. Ten other names have two-digit frequencies, five of them shared by both genres (*Maoism*, *Reaganism*, *Stalinism*, *Thatcherism* and *Wilsonianism*), and five belonging to either genre (*Clintonism*, *Fayyadism*, *Kemalism*, *Nasserism* and *Putinism*). Sixty-six *-ism* noun types are low, one-digit figures. Here, the number of hapaxes in both genres is significant. In academic texts, nine out of 37 *-ism* noun types occur only once. More specifically, only two (*Kadarism* and *Obamaism*) out of nine hapaxes are concurrently genre-specific.

In journalistic texts, 21 out of 52 *-ism* noun types occur only once. But, it is 12 out of 21 hapaxes that are found only in this genre. These are: *Churchillism*, *Goldwaterism*, *Gorbachevism*, *Kimism*, *Kingism*, *Lincolnism*, *Romneyism*, *Stimsonism*, *Sungism*, *Wallaceism*, *Zhirinovskiyism* and *Zhivkovism*. The higher proportion of hapaxes across journalistic texts may further support the initial hypothesis that these sources constitute a more hospitable environment for *-ism* neologisms with politicians' surnames. But again, any specialist contexts should be able to generate *ism* concepts that are 'nameable' by means of relevant nominalizations (Bauer 2001: 43; Plag 1999: 40). Scholarly texts are also saturated with hapaxes, though to a lesser degree than journalistic texts.

#### 6.2. Lexicalized nouns

A perfunctory look at a few dictionaries (e.g., *Collins Dictionary*, *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Merriam Webster Dictionary*) shows that approx. 50% of the nominalizations collected in the COCA search have been listed there. Some of these, for example, *Marxism*, *Leninism* or *Stalinism*, are recorded in many dictionaries. Nouns with 20 tokens or more in both genres have been found in the above three dictionaries, except for *Clintonism*. Types with lower numbers of tokens are lesser candidates for lexicalization. Fourteen nominalizations from among those with 10 tokens or less have been found in popular published dictionaries.

The OED provides definitions for 25 of the above-mentioned nominalizations. All of these defined nouns are already established in English in a substantial historical perspective. The OED does not list nouns which can be considered as current, such as *Kimism*, *Obamaism*, *Putinism* or *Trumpism*. Also, the OED does not define established names which have not been universally adopted and circulated, for example, *Genscherism*, *Gingrichism*, *Kadarism* or *Zhivkovism*. Nominalizations found in both genres in COCA seem to be better candidates for lexicalization in the OED. Nouns found only in either genre seem to be too novel for the OED to be listed and defined there. All definitions of the key nouns in the OED are organized according to the same pattern. Each nominalization is qualified with one or a few of the following designations: {*political/ economic/ social*}, {*principles/ doctrines/ philosophy/ movement/ actions/ methods/ ideas/ policies*}, {*associated with/ attributed to/ advocated by/ pursued by/ propounded by/ held by*},

{*adherence to/ support of*}. These designations are accommodated in consistently constructed definitions. Some, if not all, *-ism* nouns with politicians' surnames listed in the OED can be described with even more specific designations. Depending on a particular name type, highly specific designations have been employed to supplement the usual general statements, for example:

- **Kemalism:** '... aimed to create a modern republican secular Turkish state out of a part of the Ottoman empire'

The amount of detail included in such definitions is theoretically limitless, as evidenced in the following example:

- **Poujadism:** '... in France during the 1950s by Pierre Poujade, who in 1954 founded a populist right-wing movement for the protection of artisans and small shopkeepers (*Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans*), protesting chiefly against the French tax system then in force. Now also: any similar populist movement of the right identifying itself with the interests of small businesses'

The full description and comprehension of highly specialist formations may necessitate an encyclopaedic definiens. However, the derivation of such nominalizations can still be based on a schema which provides the necessary structure and meaning, without the encyclopaedic detail.

According to COHA, *Reaganism* and *Thatcherism* appeared in English in the 1980s and were both recorded 18 times in this decade. The two decreased their use towards the year 2000, with the latter disappearing altogether. In the 1990s, *Clintonism* was recorded four times, dropping to one occurrence in the 2000s. Thus, such nominalizations can be found wherever there is some motivation for them to be coined and used.

Nominalizations with politicians' surnames may be interpreted in many different ways by different individuals from the same place or by different speakers from different countries. There are different interpretations of *Thatcherism* within the UK, as well as in and out of the UK. There are different interpretations of *Stalinism* in and out of East Central Europe. There were/are different interpretations of *Mobutuism* in

former Zaire and today's DR of Congo and anywhere else. It is very important that inevitable interpretations, connotations and associations are kept aside. Derivational processes, both in the formal and semantic sense, are sufficiently sanctioned by rigorously designed construction schemas.

### *6.3. Local construction schemas*

Derivations based on politicians' surnames constitute a unique subcategory. Let us refer to this small area of word-formation as *surnamism*. The suffix *-ism* is the same semantically indeterminate element as that attached to all other bases. It is the base, identified as a politician's surname, that differentiates surnamisms from other derivations in *-ism*. Pragmatics aside, the formation of new *-ism* nouns and activation of low-frequency items must be guided by a pattern or patterns. Such patterns must be sufficiently precise in formal and semantic detail, but also should retain a certain generality to serve as templates for further formations. In contexts in which *-ism* nouns are most often used, construction schemas must contain an element corresponding to the name involved in the process and the key suffix. Names, such as politicians' surnames, are natural elements of political contexts.

The involvement of construction schemas in the process is particularly visible in the case of novel formations and low-frequency nouns. Speakers motivated by new circumstances coin novel nouns to name new concepts. The (often temporary) prominence of a particular politician's surname is critical for making individual choices. Numerous *hapax legomena* collected in the search signal individual authors' choices often made on the spur of the moment. The resultant formations are assembled automatically on the basis of very limited stimuli. One of these prompts is a politician's surname itself, prominent enough to constitute conceptual input. Another stimulus is an abstract conception evoked by the input surname with the suffix appended to it.

In general, *-ism* nouns with politicians' surnames are among the most decomposable derivations. However, they are not decomposable to the same degree. The identification of the component to the left of the suffix is fairly straightforward. However, its recognition as a politician's surname depends on the speaker's extralinguistic knowledge. The point

here is that some of the construction schemas are more decomposable, others less so, and still others are not decomposable at all. This hierarchy reflects the degrees of the decomposability of individual formations in *-ism*. In other words, the presence of the two components is not felt in the same way in every case.

Let us propose the actual construction schemas, based on three degrees of decomposability of their components. The concatenation of the two components, a politician's surname and the suffix *-ism*, is handled by the following construction schemas: [[SURNAME]-[ISM]], [[SURNAME][ISM]] and [SURNAMISM]. Depending on the degree of the integration of the two components, either [SURNAMISM], or [[SURNAME][ISM]] or [[SURNAME]-[ISM]] primarily sanctions a particular derivation with a politician's surname. For example, the lexicalized noun *Marxism* is sanctioned primarily by [SURNAMISM]. *Thatcherism* is presumably sanctioned by [[SURNAME][ISM]]. While the derivation *Obamaism* is sanctioned by [[SURNAME]-[ISM]], most probably. The degree of the integration of the components is largely a subjective factor, which cannot be measured. In any case, both components also sanction each other's participation in each schema. The politician's surname is primed for the suffix, and the latter is motivated by the actual realization of a surname.

In fact, some measurability can be proposed to see how decomposable, or integrated, the two components are. One way to check whether surnamisms are likely to be easily parsable is to check the frequency of the base and the respective derivation in a corpus. If the base is far more frequent than the derivation, it would indicate the productivity of the process and a high degree of decomposability of the formation. Indeed, a quick COCA check (19 July 2019) confirms exceedingly higher frequencies of politicians' surnames over their respective *-ism* derivations, for example: *Brezhnev* (418) ~ *Brezhnevism* (7), *Bush* (114,305) ~ *Bushism* (7), *Cameron* (6,570) ~ *Cameronism* (2), *Clinton* (104,353) ~ *Clintonism* (42), *Nixon* (13,190) ~ *Nixonism* (2), *Reagan* (24,238) ~ *Reaganism* (79), *Roosevelt* (8,807) ~ *Rooseveltism* (3), *Thatcher* (2,417) ~ *Thatcherism* (93). One objection may be raised regarding lexicalized derivations designating established ideologies of the past, where the surname's frequency also exceeds that of the *-ism* noun, for instance: *Hitler* (7,048) ~ *Hitlerism* (26), *Lenin* (1,483) ~ *Leninism* (82), *Marx* (3,075) ~ *Marxism* (1,029), *Stalin* (3,545) ~

*Stalinism* (194). In such cases, it can be argued that the *-ism* derivations are perceived as less decomposable than the *Bushism* types. The high degree of lexicalization of *Leninism*, *Marxism*, *Stalinism* etc. makes them sufficiently conspicuous. In particular, *Marxism*, whose frequency is relatively high, can be viewed as the least decomposable. *Leninism*, *Marxism* or *Stalinism*, synonymous with *Communism* (5,156), constitute lexico-semantic categories in themselves and their bases may not be clearly visible from a contemporary perspective.

The notation used above in the construction schemas is characteristic of that introduced in Langacker (1987) for the designation of the content of the semantic pole of a schema. It is used here for the entire schema to simplify the whole representation. The meaning of *-ism* is schematic, partially due to its frequent usage. This meaning can be compared to that of an auxiliary verb which is also used frequently in numerous contexts and for multiple purposes. The schematicity of the meaning of the suffix is represented here as ISM. The lexical equivalent of this suffix, that is the noun *ism*, carries a more lexical meaning than its suffixal blueprint.

### 7. Conclusions

The participation of low-frequency types in the key process is prevalent and important for its vitality. On the whole, noun types decrease their presence over time. The unpredictable temporariness of certain events results in a significant decrease in the number of many types or their disappearance. Some may be re-vitalized in the future when the right conditions are met. Noun types with the lowest frequencies are particularly quick to disappear. Their short-lived career is relevance-driven, temporally unpredictable and totally dependent on the speaker's whim. The continued presence of *hapax legomena* among the data cannot be denied. All *-ism* nouns, and those with politicians' surnames in particular, are characterized by high mortality rate. The degree of neologization and short, deliberate use among all *-ism* nouns prevail over a long and stable usage. In all cases, pragmatic factors motivate speakers to come up with new *-ism* formations, leading to multiple interpretations (or connotations). Contextual interpretations of *-ism* nouns all mingle with their more basic meaning which they bear in and out of context.

The above characteristics shared by most *-ism* nouns are symptomatic of their high productivity. Once-only derivations may be of

limited use for average language users, but they are indirect indicators of the vitality of the construction schemas that sanction them. Novel formations vigorously produced by competent and highly trained language users prompt subsequent quaint derivations which lead to new ones and so on. Each such once-only derivation or low-frequency nominalization generates very specific interpretations, dependent on intertextual and contextual factors. These interpretations may be available to narrow groups of specialists whose background knowledge additionally generates such interpretations. So, individual lexical items constitute one kind of motivation for the widespread morphological phenomenon under investigation.

The other driving force behind these seemingly unlimited chains of novel *-ism* nominalizations can be identified in the apparently simple word-formation mechanism that sanctions already established as well as new formations. The word-formation process and the construction schema that sanctions it must be relatively simple, both formally and semantically. The formal simplicity of this mechanism is probably beyond dispute. What is debatable is the semantic simplicity of all the sanctioning elements involved, which appear to be complex in meaning. Semantic simplicity can be approached by sidelining extralinguistic interpretations, superfluous in a rigorous semantic analysis. Instead, the schema's semantic austerity can be achieved by resorting to maximally basic notions such as name, surname and the schematic meaning of the suffix *-ism*.

Further research is needed on degrees of the semantic simplicity of word-formation schemas for other local processes. It is tempting to think at the same time about other derivational categories in the light of the claims made here. It would be desirable if our observations could be also confirmed in other morpho-semantic categories. All novel formations, heterogeneous as they are, must be based on a clear construction schema, conspicuous enough to be adopted by other formations never encountered before.

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