Martsa Sándor

On the Synchronic Relevance of Back-Formation[1]

1. Preliminary remarks

Unlike derivation and compounding, which have always dominated morphological research, the word-formation process called back-formation or back-derivation has received relatively little attention in the corresponding literature. That derivation and compounding have generated more scholarly interest than back-formation is by no means unexpected given the diversity and, more importantly, the overall productivity of these processes. Indeed, it goes without saying that notwithstanding the growing number of instances of back-formation documented in everyday language use, especially among neologisms (Lehrer 1996, Haspelmath 2002), instances of derivation and compounding by far outnumber those of back-formation. Moreover, whereas what counts as derivation and compounding is rarely a matter of debate, back-formation in English is surrounded by considerable uncertainty and there is still a great amount of indecision connected with its interpretation, concretely whether it is to be regarded as an exclusively diachronic process or a diachronic process with synchronic relevance. I think it is because of this uncertainty and also because of its increasing significance as a means of vocabulary extension that back-formation deserves more attention than it has so far attracted in studies on word-formation.

Some linguists, e.g. Marchand (1969), Aronoff (1976), Kiparsky (1982) and Aronoff & Fudeman (2005) claim, though on rather different theoretical grounds, that back-formation is basically a diachronic process. By contrast, others, including Pennanen (1975), Bauer (1983, 2001), Quirk et al. (1985), Becker (1993), Szymanek (1993), Booij (2005) and, more recently, Nagano (2007), argue for some kind of synchronicity and, by implication, for the synchronic productivity of back-formation. In this paper I also argue for this view by reviewing some current interpretations and reconsidering the claim, made most strongly by Marchand (1969) and Kiparsky (1982), that English back-formation has only diachronic relevance.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, in section 2, I will give a brief overview of the basic interpretations of back-formation; then, in section 3, I will

demonstrate how Marchand and Kiparsky view the relationship between the synchronic and diachronic aspects of back-formation and I will argue that in the light of recent research and empirical evidence back-formation must be granted synchronic relevance as well. Examples used in the paper are taken from the designated authors as well as from online dictionaries and other internet sources specified in the text.

2. *The morphological status of back-formation*

According to the most widely shared, and for that matter the most varied, interpretation back-formation is viewed as a kind of class-changing word-formation process in English, whereby a lexeme is reanalyzed and a shorter word is derived from it. In a more recent study back-formation is taken to be the combination of two rather different word-formation processes, conversion and clipping. I will look at each interpretation in the next two sections.

2.1. Back-formation viewed as reanalysis

Back-formation is treated most frequently as the reanalysis or metanalysis (cf. Jespersen 1954, 538) of morphologically not or only partially analyzable nouns and adjectives like *burglar*, *editor*, *escalator*, *hawker*, *laser*, *lazy*, *orator*, *peddler*, *sculptor*, *swindler* or *babysitter*, *emotion*, *resurrection*, *sedative*, *sightseeing*, *television*, *transcription* by removing their presumed or actual suffixes (e.g. *burgl*-**ar**, *edit*-**or**, *laz*-**y** and *babysit(t)*-**er**, *resurrect*-**ion**, *sedat*-**ive**) to derive (new) words, in most of the cases verbs like *burgle*, *edit*, *escalate*, *hawk*, *lase*, *laze*, *orate*, *peddle*, *sculpt*, *swindle* or *babysit*, *emote*, *resurrect*, *sedate*, *sightseeing*, *televise*, *transcript*. Back-formed verbs are usually attested later than the corresponding nouns or adjectives. The process of reanalysis, as explicated by Booij (2005, 40–41), is shown in (1):

(1) $[\text{sculptor}]_N \rightarrow [[\text{sculpt}]_V \text{ or}]_N$ $[[\text{baby}]_N [\text{sitter}]_N]_N \rightarrow [[\text{baby}]_N [\text{sit(t)}]_V \text{ er}]_N$

Since it involves the restructuring of a complex base or a base believed to be complex, reanalysis can also be conceived of as undoing previous derivation, concretely nominalization and adjectivalization. Aronoff 's definition of back-formation as "backwards application of a WFR [=word-formation rule]" (1976, 27) is a case in point.[2] Nagano (2007, 42–45), however, points out that this definition is not

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[2]   Similar definitions of back-formation are given by Pennanen (1975, 227) and Adams (2001, 136).

sustainable for at least two reasons. First, in case Aronoff's proposal is right, the verbs back-formed from *transcription*, *cohesion* and *self-destruction* instead of the attested *transcript*$_V$, *cohese*$_V$ and *self-destruct*$_V$ would have to be respectively *transcribe*, *cohere* and *self-destroy*.[3] Nagano also observes that with respect to a great number of irregular instances of back-formation the undoing of a word-formation rule is irrelevant either because of the synchronic unproductivity of the corresponding suffixation rule or because of the non-existence of such a rule. For instance in *peeve*$_V$, back-formed from *peevish*$_A$, the deleted *-ish* is no longer productive in English as a verbal suffix. Or, as regards *frivol*$_V$ and *pegase*$_V$, derived from *frivolous*$_A$ and *Pegasus*$_N$ respectively, either the selectional property of the suffix is violated (*-ous* does not add to verb bases) or what is deleted (*-us*) is not a derivational suffix. All in all, it seems that in a number of cases reanalysis, and by implication back-formation, cannot be seen as the backwards application of word-formation rules because these rules either fell into disuse in present-day English or because they simply do not exist.

Second, if back-formation is the reverse application of a word-formation rule that has added a derivative suffix plus some new semantic content to the base, it is expected that the deletion of this suffix causes the added semantic content to be removed too. But, this does not seem to happen. Despite the deletion of the agentive *-er*, for instance, in *babysitter* the agent remains part of the semantic description of *babysit*$_V$: 'act as a **babysitter**'. A consequence of this state of affairs is that words created by back-formation become anti-iconic in the semiotic sense, i.e. a mismatch is observable between their form and meaning. I will return to this point presently in the next section; further aspects of the semantic description of back-formation will be discussed in section 3.

Finally, there is yet another dimension of interpreting back-formation as reanalysis. In his book on morphological productivity Bauer (2001, 72–73, 83–84) notes that irregular cases of back-formation can also be seen as subtracting some material from the base rather than undoing a rule of word-building.[4] Consider the verb *self-destruct*$_V$ already mentioned above: the noun derived from *destroy* is *destruction*, involving base-allomorphy, whereas the verb back-formed from *self-destruction* is not **self-destroy*, which would imply the undoing of nominalization (and the recovery of the base morph *-stroy*), but *self-destruct*. This speaks for the deletion of some material from *self-destruction* rather than for the deletion of a suffix, that is, the reversing of a derivational process.[5]

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[3]   This argument is based on Bauer (1983, 232).
[4]   A similar opinion is expressed by Booij (2005, 40).
[5]   Bauer offers an alternative explanation of these cases of back-formation (see section 3).

2.2. Back-formation viewed as conversion plus clipping

In Nagano's opinion the aforesaid problematic aspects of the interpretation of back-formation, namely that it cannot be described as the reversed application of a word-formation rule and that it is anti-iconic can be eliminated by considering it as the joint application of two word-formation processes: conversion and clipping (2007, 56–67).[6] She argues that back-formation parallels conversion (e.g. *clean*$_A$ → *clean*$_V$, *bicycle*$_N$ → *bicycle*$_V$) in that it also lacks in iconicity, though in a different way. While back-formation is anti-iconic in the sense that less form corresponds to more meaning, conversion is non-iconic, for no change of form corresponds to the change of meaning. Another aspect of the semantic parallelism between conversion, understood as a semantically motivated and phonologically unmarked categorial change, and back-formation is that these processes display roughly the same semantic patterns, some of which are illustrated in (2).

(2)   **semantic patterns   conversion back-formation**

Locatum ('put N on/in;
    provide with N'):   *roof*$_{V←N}$ *bibliograph*$_V$ ← *bibliography*$_N$
Location ('put on/in N'): *beach*$_{V←N}$ *televize*$_V$ ← *television*$_N$
    Instrument ('use N'):   *bicycle*$_{V←N}$ *escalate*$_V$ ← *escalator*$_N$

Nagano also claims that in the process of back-formation conversion is accompanied by clipping, which accounts for the deletion of the final segment of the base. This segment, as was presented above, is often not a derivational morpheme of English (see *pegase*$_V$ ← *Pegasus*$_N$). This is not unexpected, since unpredictability of the deleted material is one of the basic characteristics of clipping (cf. *flu* ← *influenza*, *cab* ← *cabriolet*). Moreover, the presence of clipping in the process of back-formation justifies why some of its uses such as *auth*$_V$ ← *author*$_N$, *salv*V ← *salvage*$_N$, *ush*$_V$ ← *usher*$_N$ are often found facetious and, as a consequence of this, not readily acceptable to many speakers. Also, these features of clipping are present in conversion – back-formation doublets like *butch*$_V$ – *butcher*$_V$, *chauff*$_V$ – *chauffeur*$_V$, *ush*$_V$ – *usher*$_V$. Nagano (2005, 65) contends that the clipped members of these doublets have the same stylistic value that ordinary clippings have in such word-pairs as *doc* ← *doctor*, *prof* ← *professor*.

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[6]   Suggesting that back-formation is a kind of conversion accompanied by clipping, Nagano intends to improve Marchand's (1960,1969) similar view, treating back-formation as a type of zero-derivation (i.e. adding a zero suffix to the base) followed by clipping. The semantic aspects of Marchand's analysis of back-formation will be presented in section 3.

Below, in (3), the interpretation of back-formation as conversion plus clipping is summarized:

(3)   **base**   →   **conversion**   →   **clipping**

   [*author*]$_N$ → [[*author*]$_N$]$_V$ →   [*auth*]$_V$
    [*babysitter*]$_N$ → [[*babysitter*]$_N$]$_V$ →   [*babysit*]$_V$

Admittedly, this interpretation aims to account for the synchronic productivity of back-formation by linking it to the highly productive rule-governed process of conversion. In addition, assuming that back-formation also involves non-rule-governed clipping explains the peculiarities and, more importantly, the overall unpredictability of this process. However, I find this reasoning problematic, since it apparently overlooks the fact that while the synchronic productivity of back-formation is really unquestionable, methodologically it is difficult to subscribe to a proposal according to which this productivity is motivated by the combination of two processes, one being rule-governed and the other non-rule-governed.

3.   *Back-formation: a diachronic or a synchronic process?*

As has been anticipated in the foregoing discussion, a recurring issue in works on back-formation is whether it is an exclusively diachronic process or a basically diachronic process with synchronic relevance. For most linguists back-formation is primarily a diachronic process. In 3.1 and 3.2 I will present the two most well-known views (Marchand 1969, Kiparsky 1982) treating back-formation as a process with no synchronic relevance. In 3.3, I will suggest that on the basis of recent research and empirical data this treatment of back-formation should be reconsidered.

3.1. Marchand (1969)
In his seminal work on English word-formation, serving as a point of departure for Kiparsky (1982) as well, Marchand states that "[…] backformation has often diachronic relevance only" (1969, 3). Later, on page 391, he slightly modifies this statement: "The term backformation, backderivation therefore has diachronic relevance only." In order to justify these statements, Marchand points out that the fact that *peddle*$_V$ is back-formed from *peddler*$_N$ by deleting *-er* is only interesting historically, since from the point of view of present-day speakers the derivational relationship between *peddle*$_V$ and *peddler*$_N$ is the same as the one between *write*$_V$

and *writer*$_N$; or, put differently, for present-day speakers *peddler*$_N$ is a synchronic derivation from *peddle*$_V$ just like *writer*$_N$ from *write*$_V$. Consequently, the appropriate synchronic semantic description of *peddler*$_N$ is 'one who peddles', whereas *peddle*$_V$ is analyzed not as 'act as a peddler' (p. 391) but rather as 'sell things by going from door to door'. Other examples of the *peddle*$_V$ ← *peddler*$_N$ type, where there is a clash between the diachronic process of back-formation and its synchronic analysis, include *edit*$_V$ ← *editor*$_N$, *sculpt*$_V$ ← *sculptor*$_N$, *scavange*$_V$ ← *scavanger*$_N$, *broke*$_V$ ← *broker*$_N$, *buttle*$_V$ ← *buttler*$_N$, *ush*$_V$ ← *usher*$_N$, *auth*$_V$ ← author$_N$, with some of the verbs having very low frequency.

It follows from this analysis that the final criterion of determining the direction of a derivational relationship is semantic content. This criterion also works in the opposite direction, and this explains why, unlike in the derivationally related word-pairs mentioned in the previous paragraph, in *burgle*$_V$ ← *burglar*$_N$, *laze*$_V$ ← *lazy*$_A$, *televise*$_V$ ← *television*$_N$, *babysit*$_V$ ← *babysitter*$_N$, *aircondition*$_V$ ← *airconditioner*$_N$, and many other word-pairs made up of compound verbs and synthetic compound nouns and adjectives, the verbs are back-formations having synchronic relevance as well. While the semantic description of *peddler*$_N$ is 'one who peddles', *burglar*$_N$ cannot be described as 'one who burgles', since semantically it is not derived from *burgle*$_V$ as *peddler*$_N$ is from *peddle*$_V$. Similarly, then, *laze*$_V$ is semantically analyzable as 'be lazy', *televise*$_V$ as 'put on televison', *babysit*$_V$ as 'act as a babysitter' and finally *aircondition*$_V$ as 'use an airconditioner'. These cases of back-formation make Marchand reformulate his statement quoted above as follows: "The statement […] that the term backderivation has diachronic reference only, does not therefore apply to *burgle/burglar* or to similarly structured pairs […]" (p. 393). In this reformulated statement, to my mind, Marchand leaves room for the synchronic interpretation of back-formation, especially as far as the increasing number of compound verbs derived from synthetic compound nouns and adjectives is concerned.[7] I will come back to this point in 3.3.

3.2. Kiparsky (1982)

In his discussion of back-formation Kiparsky draws on Marchand's above view, but he altogether denies the synchronicity of this process in English (1982,

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[7] In all probability marginal cases of inflectional back-formation, not dealt with here, also have both diachronic and synchronic relevance. Consider *pea* diachronically derived as a singular form from the now obsolete *pease* or the (colloquial) singular forms like *eave* (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eave), *kudo* (Akmajian et al. 1990, 38), *Chinee* (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Chinee) back-formed synchronically from *eaves*, *kudos* and *Chinese* via reanalysis.

21). Before presenting his arguments, I will give a brief (and for reasons of space a greatly simplified) overview of his theory of lexical morphology (also known as lexical phonology).

Lexical morphology is an empirically based model of the mental lexicon intended to account for various word-formation processes, derivational and inflectional alike. This model of the lexicon hinges on Siegel's (1979) level ordered morphology, which hypothesizes that different word-formation processes in the mental lexicon are allocated to different levels or strata, where morphological and phonological rules operate hand in hand. In Kiparsky's version of lexical morphology there are three hierarchically ordered levels: on level 1 primary affixation and primary (irregular) inflection take place together with noun to verb conversion; level 2 accommodates secondary affixation, compounding and noun/adjective to verb conversion; regular inflections are added to stems on level 3.[8]

Similarly to Marchand, Kiparsky also argues that the fact that beg_V, mix_V and $injure_V$ are back-formations from $beggar_N$, $mixt_A$ ($mixed_A$) and $injury_N$ is only interesting for experts; "linguistically unsophisticated speakers" (1982, 22) view these verbs as bases underlying $beggar_N$, $mixt_A$ and $injury_N$ and not as derived forms. As regards verbs like $air\text{-}condition_V$ back-formed from $air\text{-}conditioner_N$ or $air\text{-}conditioning_N$, Kiparsky insists that historically the back-formed compound verb realizes the generalization inherent in the level 2 schema $[Y\ Z]_X$ proposed by him to account for the derivation of synthetic compounds. To somewhat simplify the matter again, in this schema squared brackets signal a categorial frame and the variables Y, Z and X are in principle freely chosen lexical categories. All English compounds are derived by inserting Y and Z in the categorial frame X. If X=Noun subcategorized as Agent, Instrument or Action, Z must be a noun suffixed with -*er* or -*ing* as in $chain\text{-}smoker_N$, $air\text{-}conditioner_N$ or $air\text{-}conditioning_N$. If, on the other hand, X=V, compound verbs or verb-headed compounds are derived, which entails that these verbs, just like beg_V, mix_V and $injure_V$ mentioned earlier, synchronically cannot be seen as denominal verbs. If back-formation were a synchronic process, a rule, similar to what Nagano proposed, would have to be formulated which subtracts nominalizing suffixes and recategorizes the back-formed base. On Kiparsky a rule deleting a suffix is not allowed, let alone a rule which deletes a suffix and at the same time causes category-change. Since compound verbs of the type discussed here can be derived from the above schema directly, synchronic back-formation is not necessary.

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[8]   The fact that elsewhere Kiparsky postulates only two levels need not concern us here (see Kiparsky 1983). Likewise, I will ignore Gussmann's (1988) and Giegerich's (1999) criticisms levelled against this and other versions of lexical morphology.

A further argument for rejecting synchronic back-formation comes from the comparison of compound verbs derived through conversion or back-formation from compound nouns. Whereas the former, being derived on level 2, always take level 3 regular inflection irrespective of the type of the verb head (cf. *grandstand – grandstanded – *grandstood*; *wallpaper – wallpapered*), in the latter, also being derived on level 2, the head inherits level 1 inflection in case it is a strong verb (cf. *proofread – proofred – *proofreaded*; *crash-land – crash-landed*). However, a quick search of web sources reveals that this argument is not particularly convincing, since, as is shown in (4), compound verbs with strong verbs as their heads taking regular inflection are not unprecedented, especially in colloquial use. Cf.:

(4)   When she was younger she had three sons of her own but still **babysitted** her neigh-
        bors' children, washed their clothes and prepared meals for them. (30 Dec 2010
        <http://www.arirang.co.kr/News/News_View.asp?nseq=12704&code=Ne2&categ
        ory=2>)

        After you have **proofreaded** it, and got at least 3 other people to proofread it, made
        all your changes and fix your errors, you are ready to post the topic as posted above.
        (5 Dec 2010
        <http://archive.twilightgaming.co.za/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=1432&start=0&sid=0
        564e0b7dd7a5c48e4525930997cb640&view=print>)

        Ben stole a Ferrari and they **joyrided** in it. (16 Sept 2010
        <http://www.bluelight.ru/vb/archive/index.php/t-123508.html>)

The verbs in bold face, regardless the obvious informality and casualness of the sentences in which they occur, can be taken to mark the synchronic potential of back-formation to be dealt with in the following section.

3.3. Evidence for the synchronic relevance of back-formation

We have seen in the previous two sections that the arguments for treating back-formation as a diachronic process are of semantic and formal nature. We have also seen that quite a few instances of back-formation, especially back-formed compound verbs, allow for synchronic interpretation as well. In this section I will consider arguments that have been put forward in favour of the synchronic relevance of back-formation since the publication of Marchand's and Kiparsky's respective works.

In section 2.1 the etymologically incorrect but productive back-formations were seen as subtraction of some material from the (end of the) base. Below, in (5), are a few other attested examples quoted in Bauer (2001, 72–73):

(5)   If you have to, **seduct** (← *seduction*) him. (Prachett, Terry, *Wyrd Sisters*. London: Corgi, 1988, 205)

Piotr Borisovich learned…how to **surveille** (← *surveillance*) others, how to detect and evade the surveillance of others. (Littell, Robert, *The Sisters*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1986, 129).

The crowd… thought Carella looked like a baseball player. They **deducted** (← *deduction*) this because of his athletic stance and his long slender body. (McBain, Ed, *Eight Black Horses*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985, 3).

Commenting on these examples, Bauer argues that they can as well be the result of paradigm pressure, a synchronic phenomenon of analogy, which means that the form of a derivative is predicted from the form of other semantically unrelated members of the derivational paradigm. So, *self-destruct* may also have arisen via analogy from *construct-construction*, *instruct-instruction* representing the same word-formation paradigm. Bauer notes that if irregular back-formation is taken to emerge from paradigm pressure, it must be relegated to the non-rule-governed part of morphology (2001, 84). But he also proposes, disagreeing with Kiparsky but in agreement with Aronoff, that alternatively back-formation can be "[…] seen as a rule of deleting affixes or forms homophonous with affixes under appropriate semantic circumstances". It remains to be seen, however, how these circumstances for the application of a rule that accounts for all types of back-formation can be identified. Until such circumstances are found, I think, it seems more prudent to assume, as Bauer himself suggested in an earlier publication (1983, 65), that back-formation as a word-formation process is allowed by some synchronic potential, be it an analogy (paradigm pressure) or a rule. More precisely, the diachronically motivated mechanism of back-formation continues to operate as an undoubtedly existing but as yet not sufficiently specified synchronic potential. I suppose this is similar to what Marchand also suggested in his discussion of back-formation.

If this reasoning is correct and if we consider the fact that in English the morphological possibilities to create verb-headed compounds are rather limited, it can be stated that along with conversions from compound nouns (e.g. *snowball*$_V$, *padlock*$_V$, *wheelbarrow*$_V$) another productive source to yield compound verbs is back-formation from synthetic compound nouns and adjectives. In addition, as demonstrated in (6), the assumed synchronic potential appears to account for the emergence of such

(potential) instances of back-formation that (for the time being) may be rejected by most speakers of English. Cf.:

(6)   Mr Alivijeh, who has been **taxi-driving** for 17 years, always maintained his inno-
        cence and also reported the matter to the Police Ombudsman. (12 Dec 2010 <http://
        www.taxi-driver.co.uk/?cat=33>)

        Pet **taxi drove** defensively but expanded during recession (3 June 2010
        <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=166276>)

The synchronic potential of back-formation is traceable not only in forming compound verbs, but also in forming verbs from derived nouns and adjectives: cf. $enthuse_V \leftarrow enthusiasm_N$, $cavitate_V \leftarrow cavitation_N$, $cose_V \leftarrow cosy_A$. In this respect Plag (1999, 207) notes that nouns in *-ation* are potential bases for verbs in *-ate*, cf. $?derivate_V \leftarrow derivation_N$, $?starvate_V \leftarrow starvation_N$.

In her article on neologisms, Lehrer (1996) mentions several examples of in-novative compound verbs back-formed from synthetic compound nouns. Below, in (7), a few attested examples are given that were obtained by her from spontaneous conversations (1996, 66–67). I also include an example found in *Newsweek* maga-zine. Cf.:

(7)   The front row [of a theatre] is not a good place **to people-watch**.
        The American people can **reality-test** for themselves.
        [This electronic dictionary] **spell-corrects** 83,000 words.
        I like to **channel-surf**.

        If you were a Sunni, having watched government-allied squads kill and **ethnic-
        cleanse** your people, would you accept a piece of paper that said that this govern-
        ment will now give you one third of Iraq's oil revenues if you disarm? (*Newsweek*,
        Oct. 26, 2006; p. 21)

Similarly to etymologically incorrect examples mentioned above, these ex-amples also signal the productivity and synchronic potential of back-formation. Moreover, they also call the attention to the importance of pragmatic strengthening in making the synchronic potential of forming verbs through back-formation func-tion appropriately.

Finally, Nagano (2007, 36–41) argues for the growing productivity of back-formation on the basis of data taken from dictionaries of new words. She also claims that, notwithstanding the apparent anti-iconic nature of back-formed words, the

straightforward semantic relation between them and their base-words, namely that the shorter forms are taken to be (formally as well as) semantically derived from the longer ones, also points to the synchronic productivity and, as was envisaged in the previous discussion, to the effective operation of the presumed synchronic potential. Consider (8):

(8) *butler*$_N$ → *butle*$_V$ 'act as a **butler**'
     television$_N$ → *televize*$_V$ 'put on **televisio**n'
     hang glider$_N$ → *hang glide*$_V$ 'fly by a **hang glider**'
     free association$_N$ → *free-associate*$_V$ 'practice **free association**' (Nagano 2007, 37)

To sum up, we have seen in this section that there is every reason to suppose that back-formation in English is not an exclusively diachronic process having no synchronic relevance. While it is undoubtedly a diachronically motivated process, the steady increase of the instances of back-formation among neologisms, especially the increase of forms that prove etymologically incorrect, unequivocally points to the presence of a powerful synchronic potential. Whether this potential signals an emerging rule of back-formation is difficult to say at the moment. One thing is certain: until its precise input conditions are identified, it can at best be viewed as a kind of analogy operation.

4. Conclusions

In this paper an attempt has been made to demonstrate that back-formation is an effective means of coining new verbs in English and as such it is on a par with derivation, compounding and conversion. In the corresponding literature back-formation is predominantly seen as a diachronic process with no synchronic relevance, but, as it has been pointed out, recent publications allow for a somewhat modified interpretation. The ever-growing token-frequency of back-formation in everyday language use clearly indicates that this process has a considerable synchronic potential. The present paper has shown that this potential, conceived of as an analogy operation, is still not sufficiently understood, therefore further research is necessary to specify its nature and reveal how and under what circumstances it operates.

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Martsa Sándor

Az elvonás szinkrón vonatkozásairól

Az angol nyelvű szakirodalomban az elvonásnak nevezett szóképzési eljárást többnyire diakrón folyamatnak tekintik, amelynek nincsenek és nem is lehetnek szinkrón vonatkozásai. Az elvonás révén túlnyomó részt igék keletkeznek az eredetileg komplex (vagy annak vélt) főnevekből és melléknevekből az utóképzők(nek gondolt elemek) törlésével. Főleg a nagyszámú újonnan keletkező, etimológiailag nem igazolható elvonások kapcsán (vö. hasonló magyar példákkal: *szövegszerkeszt*, *tömegközlekedik*) viszont egyértelműen látható, hogy ezek létrejöttében erős, még pontosan fel nem térképezett analógiás hatás érvényesül, amelyet a szakirodalom az elvonás szinkrón vonatkozásai erősödésének tulajdonít. A vizsgált empirikus adatok is ezt a véleményt támasztják alá.