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Applying the Cognitive View of Language to Suffix Change:
With Special Reference to the Suffix *-ese*

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1. Introduction

Since the era of what Randy A. Harris calls *The Linguistics Wars*, cognitive linguistics, in particular, has emphasized the importance of meaning, and in its early theories, the metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson is widely known. Such analyses of metaphors and metonymies within the framework of cognitive semantics have also been applied to historical linguistics, where they have been frequently referenced in explanations of semantic change. However, in the academic history of cognitive linguistics, one of Goldberg's most renowned works, which covered syntactic phenomena, was published later than many cognitive semantic studies, in 1995. Furthermore, morphology was only applied thereafter, resulting in a delay, and as such, the authoritative study in construction morphology is attributed to Booij's book published in 2010. Therefore, the application of cognitive linguistics to historical morphology has been limited to a select few studies. Considering the above situation, this study aims to demonstrate how basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics can be beneficial to historical linguistics. It focuses on analyzing changes in morphology, primarily through the cognitive linguistic view of meaning and grammar. Particularly, this study addresses the semantic aspects of morphemes; while morphology often focuses on formal aspects, it is also necessary to address semantic aspects. For example, the suffix *-ish* has developed a derogatory connotation (Hotta 2011), and the suffix *-ese* tends to be associated with the Asian bloc (Lee 2009; Otaka 2013; Aoki 2022), indicating that these are not purely formal issues but also require the consideration of semantic aspects. Considering the above, this study will analyze how the meanings of morphemes change over time, focusing on the derivational suffix *-ese* as a case study with its outline of historical development and integrating theory into the analysis.

2. Theoretical Preliminaries

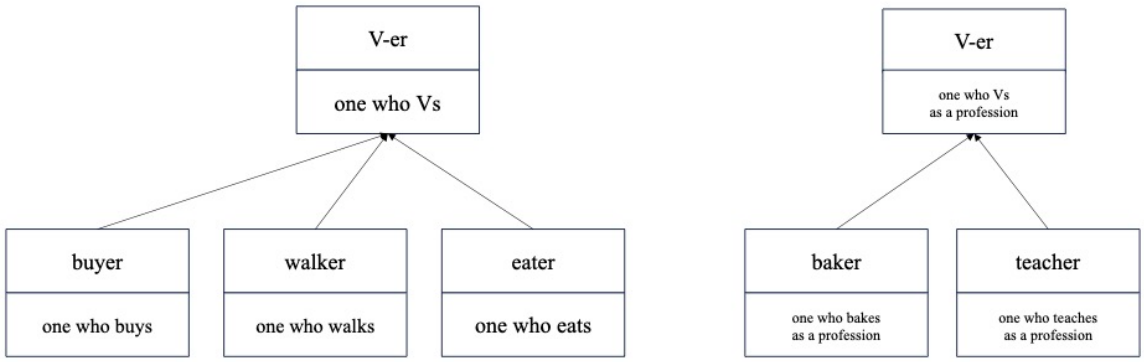
This section introduces the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics employed in this study. Emerging as an antithesis to the generative approach, cognitive linguistics has undergone extensive development. While several assumptions are shared among cognitive linguists, this section specifically describes two fundamental points relevant to this study.

2.1 Usage-based

One of the assumptions widely shared in cognitive linguistics is called Usage-based Theory, which suggests that linguistic knowledge is constructed through abstraction from concrete usage events and memories based on them (Langacker 2000; Bybee 2010, 2013).

According to Bybee (2013: 49), "the basic premise of Usage-based Theory is that experience with language creates and impacts the cognitive representations for language." In this view of seeing grammar as a bottom-up entity, from morphemes to any abstract syntactic patterns, all are regarded as abstractions from concrete usage events and treated as the same linguistic unit, that is, one construction (Goldberg 2006). In the case of morphemes, they are extracted as shown in the diagram below.

Fig. 1. Extraction of Suffix *-er* Schema(s)



What is important here is that in the extraction process, there are lower-level schemas. This means that a highly abstract schema like *V-er* is not necessarily extracted; instead, multiple lower-level schemas are extracted based on the meaning in each kind of instance. For example, *baker* and *teacher* represent a person that performs an action represented by the verb as a profession, which is different from the *V-er* which merely implies an actor. Therefore, from the word *propeller*, the schema [$[V_i\text{-er}]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [instrument which enhances $\text{action}_i]_j$] is extracted (Tsuboi and Hayase 2020: 221). New lexical items are thus created by fitting them into these extracted schemas. For example, with respect to the schema illustrated on the left side in Fig. 1, "the recently coined verb *to skype* 'to communicate by means of skype' can be unified with schema (...), resulting in the new noun *skyper*" (Booij 2010:2). Accordingly, it can be expected that multiple schemas have always been present in the development of a suffix and that the historical development of suffixes involves branching evolution based on each of the multiple schemas.[1]

2.2 Encyclopedic Knowledge

[1] A basic assumption of Usage-based Theory is that multiple types of information, including the context in which a linguistic expression is used, are stored in memory along with specific instances (cf. Taylor 2012). This paper, however, focuses not on contextual aspects but on the lexical aspects, particularly analyzing how common features in each lexical category are extracted in a bottom-up manner.

Another basic assumption significant to this paper is the view of semantics, namely, the view of meaning as encyclopedic knowledge. A linguistic form is not simply associated with a referent for each lexical item but is associated with a vast amount of knowledge in relation to the word (Haiman 1980; Langacker 1987; Langacker 2008). Evans (2019) succinctly introduces such a view of meaning:

> This principle holds that semantic structure – the representations associated with linguistic forms, such as words – relates to a large inventory of structured knowledge that resides in the conceptual system. According to this view, linguistic meaning cannot be understood independently of the vast repository encyclopeadic knowledge to which it is linked. (376)

Of importance in this study is the possibility that when morphemes are generated from specific instances, the shared encyclopedic knowledge characteristic of these instances may be extracted into the morphological schema.

3. Methodology

3.1 Why *-ese*?

In this study, to analyze changes in morphemes, we focus on the suffix *-ese*, derived from the Latin *-ensis*, whose historical outline is described in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as follows:

> Forming adjectives. In English *-ese* forms derivatives from names of countries (chiefly after Romanic prototypes), as *Chinese*, *Portuguese*, *Japanese*, and from some names of foreign (never English) towns, as *Milanese*, *Viennese*, *Pekinese*, *Cantonese*. These adjectives may usually be employed as nouns, either as names of languages, or as designations of persons; (...). A frequent modern application of the suffix is to form words designating the diction of certain authors who are accused of writing in a dialect of their own invention; e.g. *Johnsonese*, *Carlylese*. On the model of derivatives from authors' names were formed *Americanese*, *cablese*, *headlinese*, *journalese*, *newspaperese*, *novelese*, *officialese*, etc.

There are multiple reasons this study focuses on the suffix *-ese*. One reason is the specificity of *-ese* in deriving demonyms, as it tends to be attached to specific geographical areas (Sunaga 1995; Lee 2009; Otaka 2013; Aoki 2022). The second reason is that in addition to its use in deriving demonyms, it is also used in deriving language names, from which new usages have emerged, as is clear from the descriptions in the *OED*. However, because these are overviews and do not show the concrete process of the development of *-ese*, there is room for further analysis. For these reasons, this study provides an overview of the historical development of *-ese* and discusses how this process of development is compatible with the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics discussed in the previous section.

3.2 Data Collection

This study conducts its analysis by collecting words affixed with *-ese* from the *OED*'s 'compounds & derivative words' section. It then analyzes which words have been derived over time in chronological order to clarify the process of their change.

As mentioned in the *OED* descriptions, *-ese* is used to derive both nouns and adjectives. This study, however, will only analyze the use of *-ese* as a noun. The reason is that if we consider morphemes as arising from specific instances, the *-ese* that derives nouns and the *-ese* that derives adjectives are expected to be acquired in different contexts.

4. Analysis

In the OED, there are 132 *ese*-words found; however, the entries for *Londonese*, *Tonkinese*, *Romanese*, and *Yunnaese* do not provide any information on their first date of attestation as nouns. Thus, this study eliminates the words, analyzing the remaining 128 words to discuss the changes in the suffix *-ese*. Below is a list of *ese*-nouns.

Table 1. All *Ese*-Nouns in the *OED.*

Period	Total	Words
l16c	3	Genoese, Maltese, Messinese
e17c	4	Chinese, Japanese, Ambonese, Genevese
l17c	4	Modenese, Navarrese, Acehnese, Siamese
e18c	3	Javanese, Beninese, Ceylonese
l18c	13	Sienese, Guyanese, Romagnese, Congoese, Bengalese, Vermontese, Bostonese, Livornese, Viennese, Assamese, Alfurese, Congolese, Nepalese
e19c	20	Bernese, Bhutanese, Madurese, Arakanese, Balinese, Makasarese, Cockneyese, Burmese, Annamese, Sudanese, Manhattanese, Goanese, Johnsonese, Andamanese, Leonese, Oregonese, Sarkese, Kanarese, Pekingese, Surinamese
l19c	32	Faroese, Cantonese, Romanese, Macaulayese, Herzegovinese, Americanese, Ruskinese, Gabonese, Chicagoese, Nipponese, Timorese, Nicobarese, telegraphese, Hottentoese, stagese, Hong Kongese, newspaperese, Adenese, Great Andamanese, journalese, Khotanese, Yankeese, officialese, New Yorkese, Barnumese, parrotese, Brooklynese, telegramese, Sikkimese, Gilbertese, Kiplingese, novelese
e20c	30	Pekinese, governmentese, translatese, commercialese, legalese, translationese, headlinese, academese, Senegalese, Sichuanese, Hollywoodese, Lebanese, businessese, vocalese, Medinese, trade unionese, Harlemese, advertisingese, officese, Hunanese, Pitcairnese,

		Runyonese, sociologese, Whitehallese, bureaucratese, Taiwanese, Pentagonese, Marshallese, Vietnamese, poetese
20c	19	psychologese, Time-ese, initialese, mobese, Rwandese, educationese, computerese, managementese, Togolese, Katangese, mentalese, schizophrenese, Shanghainese, Irianese, Saigonese, Zairese, motherese, tabloidese, parentese

The earliest *ese*-words are *Genoese*, *Maltese*, and *Messinese*, all of which are related to Italian cities. However, from the 17th century onward, multiple words related to Asian place names were created, such as *Chinese*, *Japanese*, *Ambonese*, *Acehese*, *Siamese*, *Javanese*, *Ceylonese*, and *Bengalese*. This is because the Portuguese created demonyms for the peoples of these regions using *-ese* during their expansion into Asia after the Age of Discovery, and English then followed the word-formation pattern of the language (Sunaga 1995; Aoki 2022). Based on such vocabulary, it is conceivable that the following schema could be extracted: [$[N_i$ -ese$]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [the people who live in the Asian country $N_i]_j$]. Otaka (2013:10) pointed out that *-ese* is more likely to be affixed to Asian regions, referring to this phenomenon as suffix regionality. While Otaka did not provide a detailed explanation for this regionality, Aoki (2022: 92) considers it due to the analogical influence of already existing words like *Japanese* or *Chinese*. However, strictly speaking, this could be considered schematic knowledge related to the abstraction of *-ese* as a demonym schema, generated based on existing prototypical vocabulary (e.g., *Japan*, *China*). In this instance, naturally, background knowledge about where the original countries (e.g., *Japan*, *China*) are located would also be required. This means, not limited only to the referent, additional information related to vocabulary, such as geographical details, will also be extracted as common elements. This fact is also evident from the following anecdote about Tenshin Okakura:

> When Tenshin was walking through the city of Boston (…), he was asked by a young man "What sort of' 'nese' are you people? Are you Chinese, or Japanese, or Javanese?" (...) Turning to the questioning man, Tenshin replied as follows: "We are Japanese gentlemen. But what kind of 'key' are you? Are you a Yankee, a donkey, or a monkey?" After this fluent reply, he walked away. (Saito 2000: 39)[2]

Aside from the racist viewpoint, the fact that the appearance of Tenshin evoked the suffix *-ese* is evidence that the shared characteristic of countries being in the Asian region had already been extracted as a kind of *ese*-schema. Furthermore, the existence of such a schema led to the application of *-ese* to countries not originally influenced by Portugal.

[2] Translation is author's own contribution.

Vietnam and *Burma*, for example, were not under Portuguese influence, yet merely being in Asia led to the derivations *Vietnamese* and *Burmese* (Aoki 2022: 92).[3]

Conversely, in later periods, there exists a trend beyond the application of *-ese* to Italian place names and regions explored by Portugal during the Age of Exploration, as recognized in the earlier period. This trend involves the representation of language names which are not based on place names. Initially, the suffix *-ese* was used to derive demonyms, but as described in the *OED*, its usage has changed. This is evident from the list of *-ese* nouns used to denote languages.

Table 2. All *Ese*-Nouns Representing a Linguistic Entity.

Period	Total	Words
l16c	0	N/A
e17c	1	Chinese
l17c	0	N/A
e18c	1	Javanese
l18c	1	Siamese
e19c	16	Maltese, Assamese, Madurese, Genoese, Nepalese, Balinese, Cockneyese, Japanese, Johnsonese, Annamese, Congolese, Burmese, Kanarese, Congoese, Viennese, Pekingese
l19c	32	Romanese, Macaulayese, Americanese, Ruskinese, telegraphese, Hottentoese, Ambonese, Andamanese, Bostonese, stagese, Alfurese, newspaperese, Makasarese, Acehnese, Arakanese, Nicobarese, journalese, Khotanese, Cantonese, Chicagoese, Yankeese, officialese, Leonese, New Yorkese, Barnumese, parrotese, Brooklynese, telegramese, Faroese, Gilbertese, Kiplingese, novelese
e20c	26	governmentese, Manhattanese, translatese, commercialese, legalese, translationese, Nipponese, headlinese, academese, Hollywoodese, businessese, vocalese, Great Andamanese, trade unionese, Harlemese, advertisingese, officese, Pitcairnese, Runyonese, sociologese, Whitehallese, bureaucratese, Marshallese, Hunanese, poetese, Pentagonese
l20c	15	psychologese, Time-ese, Vietnamese, initialese, mobese, Sarkese, educationese, computerese, managementese, mentalese, schizophrenese, Shanghainese, motherese, tabloidese, parentese

[3] In addition to this tendency, this suffix also has the characteristic of being affixed to countries in the French-speaking bloc and/or Africa. For the historical background of these aspects, see Aoki (2022).

According to the *OED*, the existence of *Johnsonese* served as the seed for this new usage. Regarding the meaning of *Johnsonese*, the *OED* defines it as follows:[4]

> The characteristic language or style of Samuel Johnson; an elaborate literary style of English characterized by the use of many Latinate words and grandiloquent phraseology.

The word *grandiloquent* reveals the derogatory aspect of *-ese*. Looking at the words preceding *Johnsonese*, namely *Chinese*, *Javanese*, *Siamese*, *Maltese*, *Assamese*, *Madurese*, *Genoese*, *Nepalese*, *Balinese*, *Cockneyese*, and *Japanese*, it is clear that they include dialectal elements or languages unfamiliar to speakers of the time. Some of these also encompass regions that, as in the anecdote of Tenshin, were subjected to discriminatory treatment. From this information, which goes beyond mere referents, it can be inferred that by the time *Johnsonese* was derived, the suffix *-ese* had extracted a schema for representing languages with a negative nuance, leading to the creation of *Johnsonese*.

As a further development, from the late 19th century onwards, the suffix *-ese* began to be affixed not only to proper nouns but also to common nouns, creating usages that represent the linguistic and stylistic features of these common nouns. With regard to *-ese* derivatives that function as linguistic labels and are derived from common nouns, it is evident that their productivity has surged.

Table 3. Number of Linguistic Labels Derived from Common Nouns

	Total words	**Common Noun Based**	**Proportion**
19c	32	5	14.3%
e20c	26	15	57.7%
20c	15	11	74%

The drastic change in the trend may be attributed to the latent aspect of the act of naming by adding a suffix to place names and the competition among suffixes which function in deriving place names. This is because there are only a limited number of place names available for language naming, and other productive suffixes, such as *-ian*, are used during derivation. Conversely, there are far more common nouns than proper nouns, and there are few competitions in deriving linguistic labels that express the stylistic properties of a language the entity represented by a common noun has. This background could have led to a reversal of properties. A characteristic of the use of this schema is that many instances carry negative or derogatory meanings. The following are all quoted from the *OED*.

> **novelese**: The style of writing supposedly characteristic of inferior novels.

[4] Any underlined parts in the quotations in this paper are author's own contribution.

> **governmentese**: Language held to be characteristic of government departments; esp. legalistic, obscure, or euphemistic language; government jargon.
>
> **translationese**: The style of language perceived as characteristic of (bad) translations; language in a translation which appears awkward, unnatural, or unidiomatic, esp. as a result of the translator attempting to replicate closely the specific features of the source text.
>
> **businessese**: Frequently *depreciative*. bussiness-speak.
>
> **sociologese**: *depreciative*. The language or style considered characteristic of sociologists; sociological writing characterized by verbosity and jargon.
>
> **bureaucratese**: Flequently *depreciative*. A type of language considered characteristic of bureaucrats or bureaucratic bodies, esp. in containing jargon or being opaque, euphemistic, or circumlocutory.
>
> **educationese**: The type of language characteristic of educationalists, regarded as unnecessarily complicated, dull, and obtuse; educational jargon.
>
> **managementese**: Management jargon, frequently characterized by verbiage, opacity, and euphemism.

From these examples, it is clear that the schema [$[N_i$ -ese$]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [N_i$'s language which has a negative aspect as its stylistic character$]_j$] has been extracted. Before the extraction of this schema, vocabularies such as *Johnsonese* and *Ruskinese* referred to the stylistic features of the writers, and even before that, there was a plethora of vocabulary representing the languages of colonies and discriminated regions. The aforementioned schema must be gradually extracted based on these features. That is, there was a schema based on regional languages like *Japanese* and *Chinese*, which speakers may perceive with a pejorative nuance, and further developments have arisen from the schema via the words *Johnsonese* and *Ruskinese*. This indicates that the derogatory connotation, such as being complex, is extracted not from the referent itself but from speakers' abundant encyclopedic knowledge, such as being the language of a distant country or a discriminated region.

It can be said that a speaker with rich background knowledge and imagery will enable the creation of multiple schemas, changing *-ese* to various schemas from a suffix solely associated with Italian place names and places where Portugal arrived during the Age of Discovery. Furthermore, *-ese* has not simply been extracted as a singular suffixal entity. Considering the chronological development of the linguistic names with *-ese*, the linguistic schema had been extracted differently from the demonymic schema by the time of the creation of *Johnsonese*. New linguistic names have been created based on the former

schema, which is different from the way to derive demonyms, and this process of development indicates that a new usage evolves from one of the multiple synchronically existing schemas, causing branching changes in the suffix. The extraction of shared images is based on the speaker's rich encyclopedic knowledge and imagery, and the developmental process includes usage-based aspects such as extraction from specific examples and the existence of multiple schemas. This demonstrates that the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics are compatible with the developmental process of suffixes.

5. Conclusion

This study focused on the suffix *-ese*, analyzing its changes over time. Initially, *-ese* was simply affixed to place names to derive demonyms for Italian places and the places over which Portugal had influenced. However, it acquired the function of deriving demonyms of Asian countries beyond the historical factor of Portuguese visits, based on information, such as geographical ones. Moreover, it was found that derogatory connotations were extracted from such geographical information and the images of the target regions, altering the semantic features into new schemas. From this specific case, it became clear that the cognitive linguistic perspectives of encyclopedic knowledge and the extraction of multiple schemas from individual words are compatible with the outline of the development of *-ese* and are useful in analyzing historical changes to morphemes.

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