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NORMALITY AND NORMALCY: A CASE OF -ITY/-CY DOUBLETS IN THE BNC

ABSTRACT. Corpus-based research into derivational morphology can explain how affixes function, answer questions about their productivity and its relation to their synonymy, and clarify the rivalry between certain affixes and their semantic distinction. The aim of this research is to establish the similarities and differences between the nouns *normality* and *normalcy* by contrasting the suffixes *-ity* and *-cy* they contain in the British National Corpus (BNC). The focus is on the collocates which precede the nouns and the sources in which they appear. The attempt is also to understand what characterises the suffixes and their distribution. By focusing on *normality* and *normalcy*, we examine how lexical items behave in an electronically-stored corpus and whether a strong connection between meaning and form manifests itself in different word patterns highlighting different aspects of meaning.

KEYWORDS: corpus-based research; derivational morphology; *normality* and *normalcy*; suffixes *-ity* and *-cy*; BNC.

INTRODUCTION

Corpus-based research into derivational morphology can explain the rivalry between affixes and answer questions about their semantic distinction in English. This can be explored through the

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function of affixes, their productivity and their synonymy. Baeskow (2012, pp. 7–8) analyses the suffixes *-ness* and *-ity* using different types of corpora, including electronic, to demonstrate that a theoretical approach to word-formation called *distributed morphology* is flawed, because "it presupposes that suffixes lack inherent semantic information and conceals that the distribution of suffixes in morpho-syntactically similar contexts may be semantically determined".

Synonymous suffixes are not solely studied via online electronic corpora. Research into derivational morphology which pertain to words ending in *-ity* often compare it to its semantic relative and synonymous pair member *-ness*. The research can also be focused on the suffixes in a diachronic setting, on the corpora which was originally printed in form. Riddle (1985) exposed a semantic distinction between *-ness* and *-ity*, where "*-ness* tends to denote an embodied attribute or trait, while *-ity* tends to denote an abstract or concrete entity". This is evidenced by the analysis of semantic pairs, such as *ethnicity* vs *ethnicness*, or *reality* vs *realness*. Colour words and most ethnic names, she shows, take *-ness* as a nominal suffix. Part of the same paper is research into the history of the two suffixes explaining how their usage began to diverge because of lexical diffusion. Romaine (1985) examines *-ness* and *-ity* from a diachronic perspective, their productivity and variability in word-formation patterns, suggesting a pluralistic methodology to morphological analysis which would avoid such dichotomies as diachrony and synchrony.

Corpus-based research can bring into correlation frequent word patterns and meaning of affixes. Word patterns are defined as "all the words and structures which are regularly associated with the word and which contribute to its meaning" (Hunston & Francis, 1996, p. 37). For instance, word patterns in a study on the prefixes *un-* and *non-* forming adjectives *unmarried* and *non-married* researched in the British National Corpus (henceforth the BNC) (Jevrić, 2019a) demonstrated the difference in the origin of the prefixes, their meaning, and words that they commonly collocate with. These all explain why *non-married* appears in sources in the BNC which concern statistics, since *non-* is stripped of its negative meaning, but, instead, has an absence of the meaning it is attempting to negate.

Contrary to most research on *-ness* and *-ity*, there is no comparison between the suffixes *-ity* and *-cy*, to our knowledge, because

there do not appear to be any cases of *-ity/-c*y doublets. Plag (1999, 2003) touches upon the subject by bringing *-cy* into the discussion on *-ness* and *–ity*, and dedicates a separate section on *-cy/-ce* under *nominal suffixes*. Bauer (1983, p. 222) points out that the suffixes *-cy* and *-ce* are no longer productive, representing "loans from Latin or French rather than genuine cases of English word-formation". While the online searches of rare instances such as **formalcy* or **primalcy* as variations of *formality* and *primality* can be found, they are, at least for now, to be dismissed as linguistically unacceptable. One case of *-ity/-c*y doublets, however, is found in the nouns *normality* and *normalcy*.

All four major dictionary publishers, Cambridge, Oxford, Collins Cobuild and Macmillan record *normalcy* as a word, but vary in their description. Cambridge and Oxford offer it as an American equivalent to *normality*, showing that *normality* is still used as a word alongside *normalcy* in AE. In Collins Cobuild and Macmillan *normalcy* is provided simply as an alternative to *normality*, and it is also given in example sentences. Macmillan does not clarify whether there is any distinction between the two nouns. Collins Cobuild provides identical definitions for both nouns. Invariably, *normality* is in these four sources defined as "the state or being normal", or "a situation in which everything is normal".

Searching through the online Cambridge Dictionary the prefix *-ity* is defined as being "added to adjectives to form nouns referring to a state or quality". If compared to *-ness*, *-ity* is more likely "to develop institutionalized meanings which amount to more than just the quality lexicalized in the adjective base" (Adams, 2001, p. 32). In practice this would mean that *religiosity* is not just the quality of being religious, but also affected or excessive religiousness, Adams explains. The prefix *-cy* is not registered. The Oxford Dictionary defines both suffixes as indicating to quality or state of what you are given. Collins Cobuild gives a more detailed description of the suffixes. The suffix *-ity* is added to adjectives (including those replacing *-ious*, like *tenacious – tenacity*) to describe state, quality, or behaviour specified by the adjective. The suffix *-cy* is used to form nouns from adjectives that end in *-t*, *-tic*, *-te*, and *-nt*, indicating state, quality, or condition. In Macmillan neither suffix was found.

In the *Cambridge Dictionary of Grammar* (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, pp. 476–477) *-ity* is found with *-ty*, in tabulated suffixes which form nouns, and exemplified with nouns such as *similarity*, *casualty*, etc.

Other suffixes in the same table include *-age, -al, -ant/-ent, -ance/ -ence, -arium/-orium, -dom, -ee, -ar/-er/-or, -ie/-y, -hood, -ism, -ist, -let/ -ette, -ment, -ness, -ary/-ery/-ory, -(r)y, -ship, -sion/-tion/-xion*, and *-ation*). The suffix *-cy* is not listed to form nouns or any other word class.

If we look at the origin of the suffixes, the Dictionary of Etymology describes the Latin suffix *-ity* as an abstract noun forming suffix added to adjectives. It denotes a state or condition, usually meaning "the quality of being what the adjective describes". The suffix *-cy* is described as an abstract suffix denoting quality, its Latin, and ultimately Greek origin is stated, and its Old English corresponding suffixes *-ship* and *–hood* are provided. Bases ending in *-al* do not normally attach themselves to *-cy* to form a noun. The root of *normality* and *normalcy* is also Latin in origin.

We can see that corpus-based research aided by dictionary usage may be utilized to evaluate the properties of suffixes and their role in the formation of nouns. Furthermore, it can also assist in understanding their function in meaning differences between words which appear to be synonymous.

METHODOLOGY

The subject of this research is the comparative analysis of collocations with words containing suffixes *-ity* and *-cy* which form the nouns *normality* and *normalcy*, and the collocates which precede them. Noun patterns highlighted by electronic data can distinctly elucidate the modification of nouns through collocates. The aim of the research is to establish the similarities and differences the nouns have concerning their meaning, especially relating to the occurrence of suffixes and their distribution.

The corpus includes collocates which precede *normality* and *normalcy*. The reason for focusing only on the preceding collocates is that arranging those to the left of the noun "shows the various ways in which the noun is modified" (Hunston & Francis, 1996, p. 37). The collocations in question are, therefore, *window collocations* (see Lindquist, 2009; Jevrić, 2019a, 2019b for *adjacent collocations*). This is consistent with the concept of a *collocational span*, where any collocate which precedes or follows a particular word is subject to analysis, with a general agreement about limiting the span to four or five collocates. The analyst can decide to curtail the span, depend-

ing on the methodology parameters and what the analyst wishes to investigate.

The two nouns do not undergo the process of lemmatisation, since they are both uncountable nouns, although there is one occurrence of *normalities* in the corpus: "what survives when all the outward *normalities* of life are stripped away" (CCN[2]). As a rule, nouns in singular and plural would be analysed separately as lexemes, with the overall conclusion about the nouns as lemmas (see Pearce, 2008; Jevrić, 2017).

The corpus is collected by using the option *list* in the BNC[3], thus providing the searched word and the number of its occurrences in the corpus. By clicking on the generated word, the resulting concordances are shown, with *normality* and *normalcy* clearly emphasized. Their collocates are then grouped based on their word class and meaning.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Normality appears in the BNC 332 times, while *normalcy* appears only 15 times[4]. Following an amended version of the guidelines of Hunston and Francis (1996, pp. 56–57) on the classification of main noun patterns, the first pattern to identify is **n to N**, where *normalcy* collocates with *return to* three times. *Return* also appears as a verb two times in **v N**. We find *normalcy* collocating with *of* in **n of N**: *vestige of normalcy, lineaments of a normalcy, facade of* [affluence or] *normalcy, political economy of normalcy*. Two results follow the pattern of **n for N**: *statistical tests for 'normalcy'*, and *call for "normalcy"*.

Only *normality* is found to co-occur with adjectives in **adj N**. Their number is given in brackets if it exceeds more than one: *abandoned, apparent, approximate, assumed, biological, bourgeois, brisk, central, chaotic, contextual* (2), *domestic, established, false, heterosexual, modern, oppressive, physical, placid, psychological* (2), *relative* (2), *relentless, sad, seeming, semantic* (2), *sentence-internal, sexual, similar, social* (2), *suburban, syntagmatic*.

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[2]   CCN is a code used for marking documents in the BNC.
[3]   An interface was used to access the corpus. Available online at: https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/.
[4]   Number 13 is missing, so the BNC mistakenly gives 16 concordances with *normalcy*, instead of 15.

Normality is most commonly preceded by the preposition *of*, in a pattern **n of N**. Examples of nouns before *at*, *for*, *from*, *towards*, and *with* were also found. Nouns which precede the prepositions are grouped based on their meaning: *achievement of*; *appearance of* (2), *pretence at*, *semblance of* (5); *bounds of* (2), *limits of*, *lower limits of*, *upper extreme of*, *upper limit of* (3); *breakdown of*; *concept of* (6), *notion of*, *notion of*; *context of*; *contrast with*; *creation of*, *constructions of*; *criteria of*, *criterion for*, *conditions for*; *conviction of*; *difference of*; *definitions for*, *definitions of*; *desirability of*; *development into*; *form of* (2), *kind of* (3), *types of*; *departure from*, *deviation from normality*; *effort at*; *fetishism for* (2); *hold on*; *image of*, *photographic negative of*, *vision of*; *impression of*; *index of*; *insistence of*; *judgments of*; *lack of*; *members for*; *model of*, *prototype of*; *null of*; *one of*; *order of* (2); *patterns of* (2), *pattern of*; *path towards*; *period of*; *problem with*; *questions of*; *relation to*; *reversal of*; *return to* (10); *reinforcement of*; *sort of* (2); *set of*; *sign of*; *stamp of*; *standard of*; *surface of*; *test for*, *test of*; *thread of* (2); *tones* [of elsewhere], *of*; *view of* (3); *world of* (5).

The noun *normality* is preceded by another noun in the pattern **n N**: *every day*, *prewar*, *routine*, [*rule of*] *thumb*, *surface*. Examples of an **adv prep N** pattern are: *back to* (3), *nearer to*, *lower on*, *outside of*, and *far from* [everything. From]. And, there is one example of **adj prep N** –*representative of*.

Verbs which collocate with *normality* in **v N,** are given in their infinitive form: *achieve*, *acquire*, *approach* (2), *assign*, *define*, *demonstrate*, *desire*, *destroy*, *ensure*, *extol* [the virtue and], *know*, *like* (2), *mark*, *maximise*, *overlook*, *override*, *portray*, *question*, *register*, *reject*, *recover*, *represent*, *restore* (4), *stress*, *support*, *tolerate*, *utilise*. Patterns with verb followed by prepositions are also found with *normality*: *advance towards*, *argue for*, *cling* [desperately] *to*, *count as*, *cut off from*, *depend upon*, *deviate from*, *hold on*, *hope with*, *look at*, *obsess with*, *regard as*, *return to* (13)[5], *revert to*, *shift into*, *think of*.

The patterns *normality* and *normalcy* share are: **n to N**, **n for N**, **n of N** and **v N**, while **adj N**, **n N**, **adj prep N** and **adv prep N** are found only with *normality*. Since function words are "often not particularly informative with respect to the node word" (Stefanowitsch & Gries, 2009, p. 933), if we closely examine lexical words which precede the shared prepositions, as well as the **v N** pattern, we notice that *normality* and *normalcy* share only *return*, both in its noun and verb forms.

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5   The number of *return to* includes examples such as: *return to* [London and], *return* [C-Wing] *to*, and *return*, [slightly dazed,] *to*.

Apart from patterning, the sources in which *normality* and *normalcy* could seem relevant. The concordances with *normalcy* occur in the corpus in texts categorized under prose, social sciences, both academic and non-academic, academic texts which deal with politics, law and education, arts under non-academic humanities, and a newspaper report. We also have two examples of *normalcy* occurring in political speeches in the Hansard corpus, which contains almost every speech uttered in the British Parliament from 1803–2005.

The written part of the BNC corpus finds *normality* in poetry, prose, arts under humanities, both academic and non-academic, religion, advert, biography and miscellaneous, medicine, academic and non-academic, newspaper (with emphasis on various topics, tabloid, sports, arts, report and social), academic and non-academic source of natural and social science, academic and non-academic sources of politics, law and education, magazines, commerce and television news scripts. *Normality* in spoken language is detected in the recordings from the fields of conversation, meeting, classroom, lectures in social science, arts, and commerce, and a broadcast discussion.

Considering that *normality* surpasses *normalcy* in frequency, the sources in which the two nouns appear greatly differ in variety. *Normalcy* was found only in the written part of the corpus, while *normality* also appears in speech corpus. All categorised sources with *normalcy* match the categories with *normality*, except one (the textual speeches of the Hansard corpus), which was originally spoken, and then textualised. Areas which seem to be particularly associated with *normality* are prose, biography and medicine. In summary, unlike the case of *non-married* and its propensity for statistical sources, there does not seem to be a significant difference between sources in which the two nouns appear in the BNC.

If we compare concordances with *normality* and *normalcy*, there does not seem to be a difference in meaning: "throughout their school life totally cut off from *normality* and ordinary life" (FTX) and "People who visit always seem astonished by the *normalcy* of the life of the vast majority of the people" (HHV). Both words appear under quotes, challenging the ideas of *normality* and *normalcy*: "'*Normality*' is a nebulous concept" (CRS) and "It shows a return to '*normalcy*' in its ending" (GW4).

Concerning the word-formation rules of *-ity* and *-cy*, Plag (2003, p. 91) explains how all adjectives ending in the suffixes *-able, -al* and

-ic can take *-ity* as a nominalizing suffix, such as *available, eventual, public* producing *availability, eventuality, publicity*. Words which are formed with this suffix are described to denote quality, state or property, and are derived from Latin adjectives (the exception being *oddity*, which is Germanic in origin (Adams, 2001, p. 32). Clearly, *normal* falls into this category. Conversely, he describes *-cy* as productively attaching itself to adjectives that end in *-ant/-ent* or *-ate* (Plag, 2003, p. 88), such as *vacant, frequent, literate* producing *vacancy, frequency, literacy*.

The Dictionary of Etymology tracts the first usage of *normality* to 1833, describing it as a "character or state of being in accordance with rule or standard". *Normality* is older than *normalcy*, which is dated to 1857 and refers to the meaning used in geometry, a "mathematical condition of being at right angles". The popularity of *normalcy* is attributed to the U.S. president Warren G. Harding who, in 1920, used the slogan 'return to normalcy' during the presidential campaign, which caused him to be called out by the Democratic party for his language incompetence[6]. Two concordances from the same source in the BNC, *The Americas*, actually reference Harding's slogan: "Harding's election appeal was a call for "*normalcy*": "America's present need is not heroics, but healings; not nostrums but *normalcy*" (EWG). This leads us to deduce that the occurrence of *normalcy* is simply an anomaly, a case of a mistake becoming widely accepted over time. More so when bearing in mind that an Internet search of *normality* using the exact match search operator surpasses *normalcy* by only 4,1 million results. We can argue that the same kind of anomaly occurred with *preventive* and *preventative*, though separate research would be needed to prove the claim.

The occurrence of *normality* and *normalcy* as doublets is also explained by the idea of linguistic *blocking*. Blocking refers to the appearance of a particular word blocking another word from taking its place. Those word-forms are regarded as synonymous. Thus, the existence of *presumption* prevents **presumal*, or *mutton* prevents **sheep meat* from appearing (Rainer, 2016).

Summarizing Rainer's work *Towards a Theory of Blocking*, Plag (2003, pp. 64–65) differentiates between *token-blocking* and

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[6] In a newspaper article on the origins of *normalcy* the author references a mathematical dictionary from 1855 as the year when *normalcy* was mentioned for the first time. The author explains that Harding's choice of *normalcy* was due to his use of an old version of Webster's unabridged dictionary where *normalcy* was found, but not *normality* (Zimmer, 2020).

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type-blocking. He states that token-blocking requires not only *synonymy*, but also *productivity* and *frequency*, in order to take place. Productivity means that if a word cannot be potentially formed, it cannot be said that it was blocked by a competing word, for instance, the examples of *management* and **manageal.* Regarding frequency, a synonymous word-form has an unlikely chance to co-exist, if it is infrequent compared to its synonymous counterpart.

Type-blocking is illustrated with competing suffixes *-ness* , *-ity*, and *-cy*, with *-ness* as a more general suffix used in a variety of domains, and *-ty* used in more restricted domains. If one suffix is added to a base from the same group of suffixes, it makes other suffixes unacceptable. This makes *decency* acceptable, but not *decentness* or even **decentity*. If we apply the rules of type-blocking, *normality* should block the occurrence of *normalcy*. Plag (2006, p. 127), however, argues that this rule is intrinsically bad, as there are cases of attested doublets such as *expectance* and *expectancy*, or *exclusiveness* and *exclusivity*. *Normality* and *normalcy* also belong to the same category of attested doublets.

Also, a speaker's preference for one doublet member over the other may simply be a matter of psycholinguistics and it is related to how words containing a particular affix are stored and processed (Plag, 2003, p. 66). More frequent words in the mental lexicon block its rare, irregularly formed counterparts from being used, while at the same time allow for the presence of irregular forms. In the case of *normality* and *normalcy*, *normality* is part of individual speakers' mental lexicon, while *normalcy* is that to a far less degree. That is, at least, what the BNC tell us. *Normality* is significantly more frequent in the corpus and it is blocking *normalcy* from being used, whereas *normalcy* still appears in the corpus. Additionally, no two mental lexicons are alike, and neither is the speakers' grammar or their understanding of morphological processes (Romaine, 1985, p. 454), which can also account for the existence of the two nouns.

CONCLUSION   Using an electronically-stored corpus to compare two seemingly identical lexical items can help us establish whether there is a strong connection between meaning and form, and whether that relationship manifests itself in different patterns highlighting different aspects of meaning of *normality* and *normalcy*. When competing derivational suffixes are found with the same root, the aspects of their features, their function and distribution can be brought

into correlation with the semantic distinction of the nouns and the word patterns they constitute.

Analysing the BNC, we found no meaningful difference between *normality* and *normalcy* regarding the collocates which precede them, or the sources in which the nouns appear[7]. The range of collocates and sources grows wider simply because *normality* is more numerous. These differences exist irrespective of one of the nouns being formed through chance or a lack of linguistic prowess. The research confirmed the occurrence of *normalcy* to be an anomaly.

Linguistic blocking did not, however, restrict *normalcy* from forming and gaining a strong presence in today's English. Despite what the BNC research results revealed about the nouns and their morpho-syntactic properties, and the restrictions those properties entail, some forms of words can define those restrictions. Although this research is not devised to answer the question about why *normalcy* is gaining a strong presence in today's English, we would suggest that the usage of irregularly formed words can thrive simply due to ease of use. Namely, *normality* is a four-syllable word, illustrating a stress shift to the second syllable. *Normalcy* is a three-syllable word, with no stress shift, and therefore easier and quicker to pronounce, especially given the tendency in American English to simplify or shorten words. This is evocative of Romaine's results about speakers choosing "the form they felt surest of being able to pronounce" (Romaine in Adams, 2001, p. 147). Another conjecture would be how speakers feel about these words, i.e., whether the words have a positive or negative connotation, which could affect their choice of words. There is also the matter of speakers' familiarity with these words, which takes us back to the question of the mental lexicon. All these conjectures warrant separate research.

We could even argue that *normalcy* is not ill-formed, if we draw a parallel with Plag's examples of *decency* and *decentness* (Plag, 2006, p. 127). While *decentness* is listed in a dictionary and also found through a Google search, *decentness* is claimed to still be avoided on the grounds of token-blocking. Google's search of *decency* resulted in about 26 million, while *decentness* has around three hundred thousand results. In contrast, an Internet search showed that the number of occurrences of *normalcy* is closely approaching that of

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[7]   Conversely, sermons and fiction were found to be "favourable environments for names of qualities in -*ness,* whereas nouns in -*ity*, often more specific in meaning, are more likely to be encountered in scientific and medical texts" (Cowie in Adams, 2001, p. 149).

normality. The mechanism of type-blocking did not stop *normalcy* from forming, moreover, what transpired was that the synonymous form of *normality* appears to be increasing in current discourse.

It is evident that the BNC does not mirror present-day English. This study into derivational morphology using the BNC posits itself as a diachronic study, while in the current climate of the Corona pandemic English studies could focus on the comparison between the commonly used expressions *return to normality* or *return to normalcy* in terms of their prevalence in public discourse.

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ТАМАРА М. ЈЕВРИЋ
УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У ПРИШТИНИ СА ПРИВРЕМЕНИМ
СЕДИШТЕМ У КОСОВСКОЈ МИТРОВИЦИ, ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ
КАТЕДРА ЗА ЕНГЛЕСКИ ЈЕЗИК И КЊИЖЕВНОСТ

РЕЗИМЕ   *NORMALITY* И *NORMALCY*: ПРИМЕР ДУБЛЕТА *-ITY/-CY*
                      У БРИТАНСКОМ НАЦИОНАЛНОМ КОРПУСУ

Корпусно истраживање деривационе морфологије може обја-снити како функционишу афикси, одговорити на питања о њи-ховој продуктивности, о вези између продуктивности и сино-нимних афикса, као и разјаснити ривалство које постоји између одређених афикса и њихове семантичке разлике. Циљ овог ис-траживања је да се утврде сличности и разлике између именица

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normality и *normalcy* у Британском националном корпусу контрастирањем суфикса *-ity* и *-cy*. Фокус је на колокатима који претходе именицама и изворима у којима се оне појављују, што нам помаже да разумемо шта карактерише те суфиксе и њихову дистрибуцију. Усредсређујући се на именице *normality* и *normalcy*, испитујемо како се речи понашају у електронском корпусу и да ли се веза између значења и форме манифестује у различитим обрасцима речи који могу да открију различите аспекте значења.

Кључне речи: корпусна истраживања; деривациона морфологија; *normality* и *normalcy*; суфикси *-ity* и *-cy*; Британски национални корпус.