JAPANESE AND ENGLISH NAME TRUNCATIONS

Andrei A. Avram

Abstract: This paper looks into the structural properties of Japanese and English truncated names. Name truncation is considered to be a word-formation process and is analyzed from the perspective of Prosodic Morphology. Japanese and English truncated names are shown to be subject to strict prosodic requirements. Also discussed is the relation between name truncation and prosodic minimality in the two languages.

Keywords: name truncation, bimoraic foot, syllable, prosodic minimality, derived word

1. Introduction

The status of name truncations, word clippings and blends is a matter of some debate in the morphological literature. On the one hand, a number of authors, such as Zwicky and Pullum (1987), Dressler (2000), Haspelmath (2002) or Booij (2005), do not include truncated names, word clippings and blends among word-formation processes proper. According to Zwicky and Pullum (1987), for example, name truncations and word clippings express familiarity and should be treated as instances of "expressive morphology". Dressler (2000) states that truncated names, clippings and blends are highly idiosyncratic and are therefore "extragrammatical", i.e. they do not fall within the province of grammatical morphology. Haspelmath (2002: 25) writes that clippings and blends "are operations that can be used to create new words [but] they do not fall under morphology, because the resulting new words do not show systematic meaning – sound resemblances of the sort that speakers would recognize". Therefore, Haspelmath (2002: 25) concludes that "not all processes of word-creation fall under word-formation". Finally, Booij (2005: 20-21) lists truncated names, word clippings and blends among the types of word creation or word manufacturing, which he regards as non-morphological sources of words. On the other hand, for e.g. Joseph (1997), Plag (2003), Aronoff and Fudeman (2005), Downing (2006) or Lappe (2007), morphology explicitly includes the study of truncated names, word clippings and blends. Essentially, two arguments can be put forth in support of viewing name truncation as a word-formation process. First, as argued by Plag (2003: 117) with respect to English, name truncations "are highly systematic", and this "indicates that the knowledge about the structural properties of these categories should be treated as part of the morphological competence of the speakers". This systematicity also leads Aronoff and Fudeman (2005: 133-116) to include name truncations, word clippings and blends under the heading "other derivational processes". Secondly, although derivation is commonly defined as a process whereby new words are formed, i.e. it should add new meaning to a base, a case can be made for name truncation as a type of word-formation. As briefly discussed by Plag (2003: 117), while truncated names do not have a new referential meaning, they do express familiarity and a (usually) positive attitude towards the referent, i.e. name truncation does add new meanings. On the strength of these two arguments, in this paper name truncation is considered a word-formation process.

A second problem that needs to be adressed is a terminological one. Besides "name truncation" or "truncated name", alternative terms appearing in the literature include "nickname" (Kenstowicz 1994: 9, McCarthy and Prince 1995: 344, van Dam 2003, Aronoff

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

and Fudeman 2005: 75, Downing 2006: 62), "familiar form" (Macleod and Freedman 1995), "hypocoristic" (Kenstowicz 1994: 9, Booij 2005: 21 and 181, Crystal 2008: 232, Coates 2008: 325-327), "short form" (Hanks et al. 2006), and "pet-names/pet-forms" (Coates 2008: 325-327). However, nicknames and familiar forms are not necessarily the result of truncation. Hanks et al. (2006) list separately what they call "short forms" and "pet forms", but the latter include truncated names to which a diminutive suffix is added. As for hypocoristics, there are considerable differences in the various definitions found in the literature. Booij (2005: 21 and 181), for instance, simply defines them as "names of endearment" and "endearment forms of proper names" respectively. In Crystal (2008: 232), although the definition "a term used in LINGUISTICS for a pet name (e.g. *Harry* for *Harold*)" does not mention truncation, the only example given illustrates it. Finally, an even wider definition is implicitly assumed by Beardsley and Simpson (2009), for whom "hypocoristics" is a cover term for name truncations (including place names) and word clippings. To avoid possible terminological confusions, throughout this paper the terms "name truncation" or "truncated name" will be used exclusively.

The theoretical framework adopted here for the analysis of name truncation in Japanese and English[1] is that of prosodic morphology. Along the lines of e.g. McCarthy and Prince (1986, 1995a, 1995b and1998), Booij (2005), Downing (2006), prosodic morphology is here understood broadly as the theory of how morphology and phonology interact in the grammatical system of languages.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 focuses on Japanese truncated names. The formation of English truncated names is outlined in section 3. Section 4 summarizes the findings and discusses some of their implications.

2. Japanese

2.1 Rustic girls' names

The so-called "familiar forms" of rustic girls' names are derived by attaching the honourific prefix *o-* to a base (Poser 1990: 92, Mester 1990: 479-480, Suzuki 1995: 450). There is variation in the part of the base which is preserved[2]. Thus, if the root of the source name consists of a heavy syllable or of two light ones, i.e. of two moras, it coincides with the bare truncatum. This is the case of bimorphemic names which contain the suffix *-ko*. Consider the following examples (with boundaries between moras indicated with a dot):

(1)		Name	Truncated name
	a.	/ke.:.ko/	[o.ke.:]
	b.	/ha.na.ko/	[o.ha.na]
	c.	/sa.ki.ko/	[o.sa.ki]

Consider next monomorphemic names, which consist of more than two moras:

(2)		Name	Truncated name
	a.	/ka.e.de/	[o.ka.e]
	b.	/mi.do.ɲi/	[o.mi.do]

[1] British and American English.
[2] Sometimes called "anchoring point" in the literature on truncation (see e.g. Lappe 2008).

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

As can be seen, the bare truncatum (to which the prefix *o-* is attached) obtains by taking segmental material from the first two moras of the source name. Note that these two moras may be distributed in one heavy syllable or over two light syllables. The derivation of the familiar forms of rustic girls' names thus presupposes the preservation of the initial bimoraic foot of the source name.

2.2 Truncated names suffixed with *-chan* or *-kun*

In Japanese there is a very productive process in which the suffix *-chan* or *-kun* is added to a truncated base (Poser 1984 and 1980: 81-89, Mester 1990: 479, Suzuki 1995: 449, Kubozono 1999: 41). Consider the examples below:

(3)	Name	Truncated name
a.	/a.ki.ɾa/	[a.ki.ʧa.N]
b.	/ha.na.ko/	[ha.na.ʧa.N]
c.	/jo.ko/	[jo.ko.ʧa.N]
d.	/ma.ɲi.ko/	[ma.ɲi.ʧa.N]
e.	/ma.sa.ɾɯ/	[ma.sa.kɯ.N]
f.	/no.ɾi.ko/	[no.ɲi.ʧa.N]
g.	/ta.ka.ko/	[ta.ka.ʧa.N]
h.	/a.i.ko/	[a.i.ʧa.N]
i.	/zjɯ.N.ko/	[ʤɯ.ɲ.ʧa.N]

In such forms, the bare truncatum (to which the suffix *-chan* or *-kun* is added) is a bimoraic foot. This bimoraic foot is created by taking segmental material from the first two moras of the source name, regardless of whether they are distributed in one or over two syllables. Another possibility is to lengthen the vowel in the first mora of the source name:

(4)	Name	Truncated name
a.	/ha.na.ko/	[ha.ː.ʧa.N]
b.	/jo.ko/	[jo.ː.ʧa.N]
c.	/ma.sa.ɾɯ/	[ma.ː.kɯ.N]
d.	/ta.ka.ko/	[ta.ː.ʧa.N]

Changing a non-moraic consonant into a moraic[3] one is yet another option:

(5)	Name	Truncated name
a.	/ha.na.ko/	[ha.t.ʧa.N]
b.	/sa.ti.ko/	[sa.t.ʧa.N]
c.	/ta.ka.ko/	[ta.t.ʧa.N]

A bimoraic foot may also obtain via epenthesis of a moraic consonant[4]:

[3] Via vowel deletion and total assimilation of the remaining consonant.

[4] Epenthesis of /N/, phonetically realized as [ɲ] before a [CORONAL, –anterior] consonant.

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

(6) Name Truncated name
/no.ɲi.ko/ [no.ɲ.ʧa.N]

Truncated names can also be derived without the inclusion of segmental material from the first mora of the source name:

(7) Name Truncated name
/hi.ɾo.mi/ [ɾo.mi.ʧa.N]

Less frequently, the bare truncatum can consist of non-adjacent segments. In such cases, when combining two moras, a portion of the source name is skipped over:

(8) Name Truncated name
/ma.ɲi.ko/ [ma.ko.ʧa.N]

All the processes illlustrated in the examples under (3) through (8) yield a bimoraic truncatum. Consequently, all these forms have in common the characteristic that the bare truncatum to which the suffix *-chan* or *-kun* is attached is a bimoraic foot, which may consist either of a heavy syllable or of two light ones.

2.3 Names of regular customers of bars and of geishas

Regular customers of bars and of geishas are given special names, which are modified versions of their family names. These special names consist of a truncated base to which the honourific prefix *o-* and the honourific suffix *-san* are added (Poser 100: 91-92, Mester 1990: 480, and Suzuki 1995: 450). Several patterns of forming such names are attested. In one such pattern, the truncatum corresponds to the first syllable of the source name, provided it is heavy and it does not end in the first part of a geminate obstruent:

(9) Name Truncated name
a. /i.ː.da/ [o.i.ː.sa.N]
b. /sa.i.to/ [o.sa.i.sa.N]
c. /ko.N.do/ [o.ko.n.sa.N]

Alternatively, segmental material may be taken only from the first syllable, with lengthening of the vowel:

(10) Name Truncated name
a. /sa.i.to/ [o.sa.ː.sa.N]
b. /ko.N.do/ [o.ko.ː.sa.N]

If the initial syllable of the source name is heavy, but ends in the first part of a geminate obstruent, the vowel in the first mora undergoes lengthening:

(11) Name Truncated name
/ha.t.to.ɲi/ [o.ha.ː.sa.N]

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

Finally, if the first syllable of the source name is light, the vowel of the first mora is lengthened. Consider the example below:

(12)	Name	Truncated name
	/ta.na.ka/	[o.ta.ː.sa.N]

In this case it is impossible to derive the form *[o.ta.n.sa.N] since /taN/ is not a syllable of the source name /tanaka/.

The examples above show that the bare truncatum is invariably bimoraic and monosyllabic. For instance, if the first two syllables of the source name are monomoraic, e.g. /hɯ.zi.mɯ.ɾa/, a form such as *[o.ɸɯ.ʤi.sa.N] is ill-formed since the bimoraic foot of the truncatum is disyllabic. To sum up, the process of forming special the special names of regular customers of bars and of geishas involves taking over the initial syllable of the source name, and vowel lengthening, if that syllable is monomoraic. In other words, the truncatum must be a bimoraic foot consisting of a heavy syllable.

2.4 Truncated names suffixed with *-ko*

As shown by Mester (1990: 484), truncated names can be suffixed with *-ko*. Consider first the following pos sible forms derived from the source name *Hiromi* [çiɾomi]:

(13)		Name	Truncated name
	a.	/hi.ɾo.mi/	[çi.ko]
	b.	/hi.ɾo.mi/	[mi.ko]
	c.	/hi.ɾo.mi/	[ɾo.ko]

In all these examples, the suffix *-k*o is attached to a truncatum consisting of light syllable. However, in another pattern, an originally short vowel is lengthened:

(14)		Name	Truncated name
	a.	/hi.ɾo.mi/	[çi.ː.ko]
	b.	/hi.ɾo.mi/	[mi.ː.ko]

Vowel lengthening yields a truncatum consisting of a heavy syllable. Finally, a non-moraic consonant, either of the source name or of the suffix, can be turned into a moraic one. Consequently, the truncatum consists of a heavy syllable:

(15)		Name	Truncated name
	a.	/hiɾomi/	[ɾo.ŋ.ko][5]
	b.	/hiɾomi/	[çi.k.ko][6]

On the other hand, the following examples are ill-formed, although the suffix *-ko* is attached to a bimoraic truncatum:

[5] Via deletion of the vowel /i/ in /mi/ and partial assimilation of the place of articulation of /m/, which is phonetically realized as [ŋ] before a [DORSAL, +high] consonant.
[6] Via gemination of the /k/ of the suffix *-ko*.

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

(16)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	/hiɾomi/	*[çi.ɾo.ko]
b.	/hiɾomi/	*[çi.ɾo.mi.ko]
c.	/hiɾomi/	*[ɾo.mi.ko]

The generalization, accounting both for all the cases under (13) through (15) and for the incorrect forms under (16), can only be formulated in terms of the type of syllable: the suffix *-ko* attaches to a truncatum consisting of one syllable, whether light (monomoraic) or heavy (bimoraic).

3. English

3.1 Truncated names

English truncated names can be formed in several ways (Lappe 2003, Plag 2003, Downing 2006, Lappe 2007). Truncated names can be either monosyllabic or disyllabic. The former type is illustrated below:

(17)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Abraham*	*Abe*
b.	*Josephine*	*Jo*
c.	*Michael*	*Mike*
d.	*Tyler*	*Ty*

This type of name truncation has several characteristics. First, the truncatum consists of a heavy syllable, which respects the phonotactic constraints on English syllables. Secondly, truncated names exhibit a tendency to begin and end in a consonant, even when their base starts or ends with a vowel. Thus, the truncated name in (18a) starts with a consonant, even though the source name starts with a vowel; strikingly, the truncated in (18b) starts with a consonant which does not even exist in the source name; finally, the form in (18c) ends in a consonant, although the source name ends in a vowel:

(18)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Elisabeth*	*Liz*
b.	*Edward*	*Ned* / *Ted*
c.	*Barbara*	*Barb*

Thirdly, truncated names have a strong tendency to conform to a template. The templates (adapted from Plag 2003: 118-119) are listed below (where C = consonant, V = vowel, and optional elements are indicated between brackets):

(18)
a. C(C)V(V)C(C)
b. C(C)VV
c. V(V)C(C)

In the most frequently attested case, the segmental material filling the template is taken from the syllable which carries the primary stress in the source name:

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

(19)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*'Abra,ham*	*Abe*
b.	*,Ale'xandra*	*Xan*
c.	*,Antoi'nette*	*Net*

The first syllable of the source name may also provide the segmental material (20a, b), with the possible addition of a segment from the onset of the second syllable (20c, d):

(20)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Albert*	*Al*
b.	*Raymond*	*Ray*
c.	*Nicholas*	*Nick*
d.	*Stephanie*	*Steph*

In addition, the first syllable of the source name have to satisfy one of the following requirements: either it has an onset or it carries primary or secondary stress. Failure to satisfy either of these conditions accounts for the ungrammaticality of forms such as those listed below:

(21)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*A'melia*	**Am*
b.	*E'lisabeth*	**El*
c.	*Oc'tavia*	**Oc*

The forms below illustrate the least frequent case, in which the segmental material is taken from the syllable carrying secondary stress:

(22)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*'Abi,gail*	*Gail*
b.	*'Adel,bert*	*Bert*

Occasionally, truncated names may consist of non-adjacent segments:

(23)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Jeremy*	*Jem*
b.	*Florence*	*Floss*

Mention should also be made of changes on the segmental level[7]. Thus, onset consonants may be replaced randomly[8]:

(24)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Richard*	*Dick*
b.	*Robert*	*Bob*
c.	*William*	*Bill*

[7] See Lappe (2007, chapter 10) for a detailed analysis of these segmental changes.
[8] Such name truncations are called "idiosyncratic forms".

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

Stressed vowels occasionally change, e.g. /i:/ turns into [ɛ], /eɪ/ into [ɪ], /ɑ:/ into [ɛ], and /aɪ/ into [ɪ]:

(25)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Amelia*	*Mel*
b.	*James*	*Jim*
c.	*Margret*	*Meg*
d.	*Michael*	*Mick*

Consonants may also be subject to change. For instance, /θ/ is replaced by [t] in coda position:

(26)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Bartholomew*	*Bart*
b.	*Nathaniel*	*Nat*

The behaviour of /r/ varies: it survives if it occurs in the onset of the truncated name (27a) or as the first member of a coda cluster[9], as in (27b):

(27)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Robert*	*Rob*
b.	*Barbara*	*Barb*

However, /r/ cannot be the single coda consonant. As put by Coates (2008: 327), "[s]uch a word-final /r/ is phonologically inadmissible in the non-rhotic dialects of British English". Two "repair strategies" are attested. One of them consists of replacing /r/ with [l]:

(28)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Derek*	*Del*
b.	*Harry*	*Hal*
c.	*Sarah*	*Sal*

The other strategy is to substitute /r/ by [z]:

(29)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Barry*	*Baz*
b.	*Carol*	*Caz*
c.	*Gary*	*Gaz*
d.	*Sharon*	*Shaz*

In some cases, name truncations in [l] compete with those in [z][10]:

(30)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Derek*	*Del*/*Dez*
b.	*Lawrence*	*Lol*/*Loz*

[9] In the so-called "rhotic" dialects.
[10] See Coates (2008: 327).

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

To sum up, English monosyllabic truncated names are generally formed on the basis of a stressed syllable of the source name. However, an unstressed first syllable may be preserved, provided it has an onset. In all monosyllabic truncated names the syllable is heavy.

Besides monosyllabic truncated names, there are also disyllabic ones. As noted by Downing (2006: 62), "some larger names have two syllable nicknames (in addition, in some cases, to monosyllabic nicknames)". The segmental material is mostly provided the syllable carrying primary stress and from the following one, as illustrated by the examples below:

(31)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Alexander*	*Sander*
b.	*Arabella*	*Bella*
c.	*Vanessa*	*Nessa*

Downing (2006: 62) claims that disyllabic name truncations "are identical to the main stress Foot of the Base". However, example (32) demonstrates that the segmental material can also be taken from a syllable carrying secondary stress and from the following one:

(32)

Name	Truncated name
Alexander	*Alec*/*Alex*

To conclude, the form of English truncated names is that of heavy syllable or of a disyllabic foot.

3.2 Truncated names suffixed with *-ie*

English truncated names may be augmented by the addition of the diminutive suffix *-ie*[11] (Kenstowicz 1994: 9-10, van Dam 2003, Plag 2003: 120-121, Lappe 2007). Consider first the examples below:

(33)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Abraham*	*Aby*
b.	*Caroline*	*Carrie*
c.	*Jennifer*	*Jenny*
d.	*Madeline*	*Maddie*
e.	*Patricia*	*Patty*
f.	*Rebecca*	*Becky*

The truncated names which are formed according to this pattern are all disyllabic, with the first syllable carrying stress.

The examples under (34) suggest the following rule accounting for these name truncations: extract a vowel from a prominent position of the source name (i.e. the stressed vowel or the initial vowel) and a consonant on each side, and then add the diminutive suffix *-ie*/*-y*. However, in a number of other forms more than one consonant is extracted[12]:

[11] Also spelled *-y* and, less frequently, *-ey*.
[12] In the case of the forms in (34b) and (34c), this is true only of rhotic dialects.

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

(34)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Andrew*	*Andy*
b.	*Bernard*	*Bernie*
c.	*Margaret*	*Margie*

On the other hand, a name truncation such as the one below is ungrammatical:

(35)

Name	Truncated name
Patricia	**Patrie*

Moreover, as noted by Kenstowicz (1994: 9), the same situation holds for truncated names formed from foreign source names. Thus, the name truncations in (36) are well-formed:

(36)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Helmut*	*Helmie*
b.	*Zygmunt*	*Zyggie*

However, the following truncated name is ill-formed:

(37)

Name	Truncated name
Zygmunt	**Zygmie*

Plag (2003: 120) notes that in these truncated names "the second syllable never shows a complex onset, even if the base has a complex onset in its second syllable (e.g. *Andrew* → *Andy*, not **Andry*)", but does not account for this characteristic. As already shown by Kenstowicz (1994: 10), the bare truncatum (to which the diminutive suffix *-ie* / *-y* is attached) must be a possible English syllable[13]. Indeed, whereas e.g. [ænd], in (34a), and [hɛlm], in (36a), are possible English syllables, [pætr], in (35), and [zɪgm], in (37), are not. Kenstowicz (1994: 9) further formulates the following generalization: "a prominent vowel (initial or stressed) is located and as many surrounding consonants are packed into the nickname as can be accommodated by the language's syllable template" and "the result is suffixed by the diminutive *-ie*"[14]. However, this claim is disconfirmed by several forms, including one of his own examples (in 38b):

(38)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Frances*	*Frannie*
b.	*Victoria*	*Vickie*
c.	*Walter*	*Wally*

As can be seen, although e.g. [fræns], [vɪkt] and [wɒlt] are possible English syllables, the second consonant in the coda cluster is not preserved. Such clusters are "randomly simplified" (Lappe 2007: 245). This is confirmed by the existence of other name truncations (from Lappe 2007) in which the second consonant is preserved:

[13] See also van Dam (2003: 3).
[14] An essentially similar generalization is found in van Dam (2003: 5-6).

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

(39)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Frances*	*Francy*
b.	*Octavia*	*Octy*
c.	*Walter*	*Walty*

Note, finally, that changes may occur in the segmental make-up of these truncated names. For instance, /aɪ/ turns into [ɪ], /ɑ:/ into [æ]:

(40)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Michael*	*Mickey*
b.	*Margaret*	*Maggie*

As for consonants, /θ/ is frequently replaced by [t]:

(41)

	Name	Truncated name
a.	*Katherine*	*Kitty*
b.	*Nathaniel*	*Natty*

To sum up, the form of name truncations with the diminutive suffix *-ie* is always that of a trochaic disyllabic foot. The bare truncatum is monosyllabic and it consists of a heavy syllable which is most frequently, but not always, the maximal syllable extractable from the source name and which conforms to the structural constraints on possible syllables.

4. Conclusions

This paper has shown that truncated names in both English and Japanese exhibit systematic structural properties.

Morphologicaly, truncated names can be prefixed, suffixed or both prefixed and suffixed in Japanese, whereas in English they can consist of a bare truncatum or of a truncatum augmented with a diminutive suffix.

In both languages name truncation is a prosodic operation defined over syllables and feet. The shape of the truncatum in Japanese and English is that of a heavy syllable or of a disyllabic foot[15]. This is in accordance with the principle of foot binarity (e.g. McCarthy and Prince 1986, 1995a, 1995b, Hayes 1995, McCarthy and Prince 1998, Downing 2006, Kager 2007, Alber 2009): feet are binary under moraic and syllabic analysis. Moras, syllables and feet are all primitives of Universal Grammar, i.e. abstract linguistic categories[16]. However, name truncations in the two languages also demonstrate the so-called "psychological reality" of moras, syllables and feet[17]. Truncated names are therefore an "example of phonological knowledge" (Kenstowicz 1994: 9).

In both Japanese and English truncated names the segmental material is generally taken from a prominent syllable. In Japanese it is usually the first syllable that provides the segmental material whereas in English it is either the first or one which carries stress. This is

[15] For a discussion of the role of the foot in truncation see Alber (2009).
[16] Cf. Kenstowicz (1994: 9-10).
[17] For the psychological reality of moras, syllables and feet in Japanese see Kubozono (1992), Avram (1996), Kubozono and Honma (2002), Avram (2005: 71-82 and 100-105), Vance (2008: 117-131) and Otaka (2009: 47-64).

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

consistent with cross-linguistic findings: according to Lappe (2008), "anchoring is surprisingly uniform", with initial and (main-) stressed syllables as anchoring points[18].

English resorts to simplification of truncation-medial consonant clusters as a repair strategy whereby the truncatum is adjusted in accordance with the phonotactic constraints on possible syllables. As noted by Downing (2006: 142), truncation-medial simplification of consonant clusters "always results in a simplex coda and onset". However, Downing (2006: 142) also states that "the only allowable coda – onset sequences are the least marked: sonorant – obstruent or *s* – obstruent". This claim is disconfirmed by the occurrence of forms such as English *Octy* (from *Octavia*), in which a marked cluster like [kt] survives and therefore yields an obstruent – obstruent sequence.

The foot is also relevant for the truncation-medial simplification of consonant clusters attested in English. Name truncations are parsed into a trochaic stress foot, and, as mentioned by Downing (2006: 142), "it is extremely common, cross-linguistically, for consonants and consonant sequences to be reduced in markedness or complexity in Foot-medial position, as this is a weak position".

There is another factor which determines the phonological shape of the monosyllabic bare truncatum in English truncated names. In addition to being a possible syllable, the truncatum tends to be the maximal syllable extractable from the source name[19].

In both Japanese and English the truncatum occasionally consist of non-adjacent segments.

Changes on the segmental level of truncated names occur in both languages. However, in Japanese such changes are dictated by the necessity to conform to a strict prosodic requirement: vowel lengthening, changing a non-moraic consonant into a moraic one or moraic consonant insertion all create a mora, such that the resulting truncatum is a bimoraic foot.

Consider, finally, the issue of prosodic minimality. Booij (2005: 181) writes that "the morphological use of the prosodic category 'minimal prosodic word' is also found in the formation of hypocoristics […] through truncation". In her cross-linguistic survey of truncated names Lappe (2008) also notes that "most truncations correspond to the minimal prosodic word form predicted in Prosodic Morphology". Name truncations figure prominently among the pieces of evidence adduced in support of the claim that English has a minimal word constraint (e.g. McCarthy and Prince 1998: 287-288). As put by Aronoff and Fudeman (2005: 76), in English "even the shortest of names, nicknames, must consist minimally of a heavy syllable or two light syllables". This is consistent with the fact that in English, which has quantity-sensitive stress, the stress foot type is a moraic trochee (Hayes 1995). The two moras can be distributed either in one heavy syllable, i.e. the minimal stress foot, or over two light syllables, i.e. the maximal stress foot. As put by Downing (2006: 62), this means that English "[name] truncations match the minimality and maximality conditions on the stress Feet of the language". This is consistent with Lappe's (2008) findings that cross-linguistically "many truncations correspond to the maximal minimal prosodic word template predicted by […] Prosodic Morphology". The relation between name truncations and prosodic minimality is less straightforward in Japanese. First, Japanese does not have a minimal word constraint (Itô 1990): lexical/content words may consist of a single, light syllable, e.g. *hi* 'fire', *ki* 'tree', *te* 'hand'. In truncated names, however, the truncatum has to consist of a bimoraic foot. This suggests that the prosodic minimality constraint at issue only holds for derived forms in

[18] See also Alber (2009).
[19] Cf. Itô and Mester (1997) on German name truncations.

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

Japanese[20]. As noted by Downing (2006: 103), "derived words in some languages are subject to different minimality constraints from underived words". Japanese, then, belongs to this class of languages, unlike English. Secondly, the occurrence of the type of truncated names suffixed with *-ko* has an important theoretical implication for the phonology of Japanese. As is well known (Itô 1990, Avram 2005: 95), prosodic minimality in modern standard Japanese requires that the base of derived words should consist of at least one bimoraic foot. Since the base to which the suffix *-ko* is attached can also be a single, light syllable, i.e. monomoraic, this shows[21] that further research into the nature of the minimal word in Japanese is called for.

Andrei A. Avram
University of Bucharest
Department of English
andrei2.avram@gmail.com

References

Alber, B. 2009. The foot in truncation. Hand out of presentation at CUNY Conference on the Foot, 15-17 January 2009. <http://www.cunyphonologyforum.net/FOOTPAPER/alberhandout.pdf>.

Aronoff, M. and Fudeman, K. 2005. *What is Morphology?* Oxford: Blackwell.

Avram, A. A. 1996. The psychological reality of the mora. Paper presented at 10. Tagung der deutschen Japanologen, 10-12 October 1996, "Ludwig Erhard" University, Munich.

Avram, A. A. 2005. *Fonologia limbii japoneze contemporane*. Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

Beardsley, D. and Simpson, J. 2009. Hypocoristics in New Zealand and Australian English. In P. Peters, P. Collins, A. Smith (eds.), *Comparative Studies in Australian and New Zealand English*, 49-69. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Booij, G. 2005. *The Grammar of Words. An Introduction to Linguistic Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coates, R. 2008. Names. In R. Hogg and D. Denison (eds.), *A History of the English Language*, 312-351. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. 2008. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, sixth edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

van Dam, M. 2003. On the phonological structure of /i/-suffixed English nicknames. <http://www.indiana.edu/~iulcwp/pdfs/03-vandam01.pdf>.

Downing, L. J. 2006. *Canonical Form in Prosodic Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dressler, W. U. 2000. Extragrammatical vs. marginal morphology. In U. Doleschal and A. M. Thornton (eds.), *Extragrammatical and Marginal Morphology*, 1-10. Munich: Lincom.

Hanks, P., Hardcastle, K. and Hodges, F. 2006. *A Dictionary of First Names*, second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haspelmath, M. 2002. *Understanding Morphology*. London: Arnold.

Hayes, B. 1995. *Metrical Stress Theory: Principles and Case Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Itô, J. 1990. Prosodic minimality in Japanese. In K. Dutton, M. Noske and M. Ziolkowski (eds.), *Chicago Linguistic Society* 26, *Papers from the Parasession on the Syllable in Phonetics and Phonology*, 213–239. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Itô, J. and Mester, A. 1997. Sympathy Theory and German truncations. In B. Morén and V. Miglio (eds.), *University of Maryland Working Papers in Linguistics* 5, 117-139. College Park, MD: University of Maryland.

Joseph, B. 1997. On the linguistics of marginality: The centrality of the periphery. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 33: 197-213.

Kager, P. 2007. Feet and metrical stress. In P. de Lacy (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Phonology*, 195-227. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[20] Itô (1990). For other examples of derived words illustrating this constraint see in particular Avram (2005: 83-85 and 88-94).

[21] See also Mester (1990: 484).

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)

Kenstowicz, M. 1994. *Phonology in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
Kubozono, H. 1992. Nihongo no mōra: sono yakuwari to tokusei. In S. Haraguchi (ed.), *Nihongo no mōra to onsetsukōzō ni kan suru sōgōteki kenkyū (I)*, 48-61. Tsukuba: Tsukuba Daigaku.
Kubozono, H. 1999. Mora and syllable. In N. Tsujimura (ed.), *The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics*, 31-61. Oxford: Blackwell.
Kubozono, H. and Honma, T. 2002. *Onsetsu to mōra*. Tokyo: Kenkyūsha.
Lappe, S. 2003. Monosyllabicity in prosodic morphology: The case of truncated personal names in English. In G. E. Booij and J. van Marle (eds.), *Yearbook of Morphology 2002*: 35-86. Dordrecht: Foris.
Lappe, S. 2007. *English Prosodic Morphology*. Dordrecht: Springer.
Lappe, S. 2008. Truncation and exponence – How small can you get?. Hand out of presentation at DFG Network Core Mechanism of Exponence, 11-12 January 2008. <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/!exponet/Slides/January08/Lappe.pdf>.
Macleod, I. and Freedman, T. 1995. *The Wordsworth Dictionary of First Names*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
McCarthy, J. J. and Prince, A. S. 1986. Prosodic morphology. Ms, University of Massachusetts.
McCarthy, J. J. and Prince, A. S. 1995. Prosodic morphology. In J. A. Goldsmith (ed.), *The Handbook of Phonological Theory*, 318-366. Oxford: Blackwell.
McCarthy, J. J. and Prince, A. S. 1998. Prosodic morphology. In A. Spencer and A. Zwicky (eds.), *A Handbook of Morphology*, 283-305. Oxford: Blackwell.
Mester, R. A. 1990. Patterns of truncation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 21 (3): 478-485.
Otaka, H. 2009. *Phonetics and Phonology of Moras, Feet, and Geminate Consonants in Japanese*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
Plag, I. 2003. *Word-formation in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Poser, W. J. 1984. Hypocoristic formation in Japanese. In M. Cobler, S. MacKaye and M. Westcoat (eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, 218-229. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
Poser, W. J. 1990. Evidence for foot structure in Japanese. *Language* 66 (1): 78-104.
Suzuki, H. 1995. Minimal words in Japanese. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 31 (1): 443-463.
Vance, T. J. 2008. *The Sounds of Japanese*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Zwicky, A. and Pullum, G. K. 1987. Plain morphology and expressive morphology. *Berkeley Linguistic Society* 13: 339-342.

BDD-A9845 © 2010 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 06:04:28 UTC)