The system behind the libfix

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This paper wants to discuss two issues:
- an apparently unsystematic word-formation phenomenon: libfixing
- in connection with this and related thereto the difference between syntagmatic and paradigmatic word formation and productivity

In 2010 Arnold Zwicky introduced the term 'libfix' for non-morphemic segments that can be 'liberated' form a word and that can become productive as if it was an affix, as in (1) –(3):

(1) anniversary	(2) delicious	(3) Armageddon
-Iversary	-licious	-(ma)geddon
blogiversary	Bubblicious	snowmageddon
monthiversary	babelicious	Obamageddon

At first sight, these new affix-like segments seem to have been formed and to operate without any system. In this presentation this will be shown to be an incorrect assumption. To clarify this, a parallel will be drawn with another non-morphemic process of word formation, blending.

The same systemic factors that play a role in blending appear to work in libfxing. These are syllabic structure and stress. Moreover, both blends and libfixes are consciously formed.

However, most blends consist of truncated parts of both source words, whereas the result of libfixing is the combination of a full first source word with a curtailed segment of the second source word.

In addition, there may appear a semantic difference. Libfixes turn out to be the semantic head of the newly formed words, where the essential meaning aspect of the model word (= the second source word) appears to have been transferred to the libfix. This semantic primacy of the left part only applies to a certain type of blends. This is the case in the examples under (4), but not in those in (5).

(4) sportel	(5) Oxbridge
glamping	stagflation
advertorial	brunch

For instance, a *sportel* is a sort of hotel, whereas Oxbridge is just the fusion of features of Oxford and Cambridge. Because of this difference, one cannot fully equate blending and libfixing.

The conclusion of this part of the research will be that the result of blending and libfixing share common formal features, but that the phenomena must nevertheless remain distinct.

As their name already suggests libfixes are affix-like elements which may become full fledged affixes at a later stage of their development. In the second part of this presentation the differences and similarities are explored between affixes, that have arisen in the traditional way, and this new group. Traditional suffixes are considered to be the result of a process of grammaticalization and their development goes through a syntagmatic process, compounding, whereas this libfix group arise rather from a paradigmatic word-formation process, in which the notion analogy plays an essential role (cf. hamans 2021).

References

Hamans, Camiel (2021). The rise of non-morphemic word-formation. Robert Kiełtyka (ed.). *Studies in the Evolution of the English Language.* Warsaw: peter lang: 173-205.

Zwicky, Arnold (2010). *Libfixes* < http://arnoldzwicky.org/2010/01/23/libfixes/>