SUFFIXES -IE AND -Y
IN MODIFYING COMMON FIRST NAMES

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Abstract

The use of suffixes in the English language shows various functions, and one of them is endearment that happens especially in common first names or the way one addresses other people. This study aims to analyze the use of the suffix –ie and -y and to show endearment, especially in common first names and other possible words that also indicate endearment. This is a qualitative study that uses document analysis. The main data came from a list of common names as seen in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 7th edition. Some additional data are also included, which are common names that are not listed in the dictionary. An additional observation was done to find adjectives-turn-nouns that are modified using suffixes -ie and -y that causes their category change. The research result shows that most of the nicknames usually come from either the first syllable of the name or the second or third syllable, and then those are modified using the suffix to create nicknames.

Keywords: endearment; first name; nickname; proper names; syllable

1. Introduction

Language is used by humans to communicate and express themselves. One of the forms of expression humans use is nicknames. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a nickname as a noun is defined as "a familiar or abbreviated form of a forename" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2022), or in other words, nicknames are how people address someone else by shortening their names. Nicknames are used by people who know each other well enough (Holmes & Wilson, 2017) and it shows affection as well as closeness, or sometimes hatred. A Canadian sociologist, Erving Goffman used the concept of backstage and frontstage to introduce the idea of people's interaction (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Nicknames and sometimes endearments are results of backstage talk and generally do not occur immediately in the first interactions between people.

Holmes and Wilson (2017) describe an example of a woman named Margaret. Her coworker said "goodbye, Margaret" to which she replies 'goodbye Mike.' When her close friend rings her phone, she calls her 'Meg.' People who are very close to her use the short form of her name, which is Meg, to call her instead of using her full first name, Margaret. That nickname the friend used to call her is a diminutive that comes from her name. Oxford English Dictionary defines diminutive as "denoting something

little, usually applied to derivatives or affixes expressing something small" ("Diminutive, Adj," 2022). In addition to the definition, linguists describe the term shortening words as diminutive, it shortens words and sometimes would end using -ie (Hamidov, Abdulazizova, & Juraev, 2018). A diminutive represents words and suffixes that are used to express something small and other connotations such as affection. According to Amaglobeli (2021), diminutives name are usually used to refer to younger children by older adults.

Diminutives are also used in communication with pet animals in some countries such as Italy, German, English, and Arab asymmetrically. However, when it comes to addressing children or lovers, the communication became symmetrical (Mattiello, Ritt-Benmimoun, & Dressler 2021). Dziwirek (2019) also revealed in her research that American parents address their children using their first names and their diminutives, nicknames, and terms of endearment, while English parents use the child's name itself and their nicknames.

Nicknames, terms of endearments, and diminutives are closely related in the practice. A nickname can come from an endearment, or can also root in the nickname itself but is modified using suffixes -ie or -y as diminutives. The example earlier about Margaret did not include the suffix -ie or -y as her nickname from her friend was 'Meg' and not 'Maggie.' The name 'Meg' is the diminutive of her name and it shows the level of closeness they have.

The expression of endearment can come from the use of the suffix -y or -ie in the English language. According to Shields Jr (2001), the use of morphemes -y or -ie first appeared as renderings of French names such as Davy which is a pet form of David. Aikhenvald (2019) states that the affective value of linguistics reflects a speaker's attitude, either endearment, respect, or disdain. According to Grząśko (2015), terms of endearment have two main functions, which are as part of everyday speech that expresses emotions and strengthens the ties but also may come as condescending because it expresses incompetence of the addressee. Endearment itself is used to address something (object, pet, person) that a speaker feels affection for it (Tauchid, 2018). Endearments may be related with forms such as pet names or sweet talk, or affectionate names, which example include calling mushroom, dove, sugar pie, sweetheart, sweetie, baby, and babe to a partner (Grząśko, 2015). Most endearments are used by people who are familiar with and close to one another., which cover also lovers, partners, family members, and close friends.

Covarrubias (2002) was a Mexican person that grew up with nicknames from her grandmothers and great-grandmothers such as Pato, Patita, Patricia, and sometimes mi Rosita de Castilla. However, at school and everywhere else, her nickname became Pali, Paty, or Patty, the Spanish diminutives for Patricia. Similar to Spanish diminutive, English also has a suffix which meaning is diminutive. The ending -ie (and sometimes a variation of -y) has the meaning of diminutive, for example, to call a dog 'doggie' (O'Grady & Archibald 2016). Although this usually came in the early stages of English acquisition that appeared in children's speech development, the practice of using suffixes -ie and -y continues.

According to Oxford English Dictionary, the variations of the suffix -y and -ie are used to form pet names and familiar diminutives, as well as in proper names such as Annie and Betty. The suffix originated in Scottish in early 1400, the examples include Cristie (diminutive of Cristin or Cristian), Sandy (from Alexander), and Richy (from Richard). This research focuses on the use of the suffix -y and -ie in common first

names that creates either term of endearment or nicknames. As defined by Oxford English Dictionary, a nickname is a familiar name given to a person as a fitting replacement to the proper names. This research addresses one question: How do the suffixes -ie and -y modify common first names in creating the nicknames?

2. Literature Review

This research's foundation is morphology and sociolinguistics. Morphology is the domain of linguistics that focuses on word formation. Morphology gives insights into the categorization of words and the structure of words (O'Grady & De Guzman 2016). Sociolinguistics, on the other hand, examine the relationship between language and society to explain why humans use different language in a different social context, as well as identify the social function of a language in a social setting (Holmes & Wilson, 2017).

According to Plag (2018), the English suffix -y creates diminutive in names, which happens from a combination of truncation and suffixation (the absence of parts of the base word on the one hand and the presence of the suffix -y on the other end). The suffix -y in English is added to truncate names. Truncation is a process that expresses the relationship between a derived word and its base by the lack of phonetic material in the derived word. The examples mentioned include the name Mandy which came from Amanda and Andy from Andrew. The name Andrew became Andy by removing the -rew and replacing it with -y, creating the name Andy. Truncated names are used by people who they feel familiar with or have a positive attitude toward the people they referred to (Plag, 2018). Diminutives consist of two variants, namely -y and -ie.

The use of nicknames or endearments in sociolinguistics is explained as something that is used between people who know each other well (Holmes & Wilson 2017). Nicknames and endearments are a result of a long-term interaction that most likely happened in the backstage talk, a term used by Erving Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, which is defined as someone's life that involves partners, housemates, and family members where one may not behave formally (Cole, 2019).

Afful and Nartey's (2013) research aimed to examine terms of endearment as verbal expressions to demonstrate emotional attachment. The research used ethnographic research to collect the data from students at the University of Cape Coast. The results showed that there are four key categories in the linguistic repertoire used in communicative encounters, namely, epithets, flora terms, royal terms, and coinages from personal names. Epithets are endearment that uses either adjectives, descriptive words, or nouns to get one's attention. Flora terms refer to the names that belong to the plant, flowers, or gardening family. Royal terms are the title that represents royalty that is frequently used by the male students to call their female students such as queen, princess, and empress. The last category is a coinage from personal names, which is obtained by manipulating the linguistics resources.

Febrianti and Teuku (2021) researched endearment terms used in casual conversation in digital communication. The variations endearment terms were categorized according to their origins of language, which are English, Indonesian, and regional languages. The functions of endearment used included keeping up with the trend, using them as jokes, and showing closeness to the people they call.

Aghbaru and Mahrooqi (2019) researched the terms of endearment found in the Omani Arabic language. From their research, it is revealed that terms of endearment are aimed to project an identity that represents intimacy and friendship, as well as

inferiority and subordination. As they describe terms of endearment as a crucial tool in verbal linguistics to address close friends and family to show intimacy and reinforce relationships. The result shows that endearment is used by Omani women to express affection and solidarity. Nevertheless, in the gender-based differentiation part, the use of endearment by Omani women suggests the opposite. The endearment expresses women's inferiority, weakness, and subordination.

Ezebube, Chukwuneke, and Onuagha (2020) researched the use of pet names among couples in Nigeria. The research reveals that the use of pet names depends on some factors, namely age, gender, educational background, occupation, and region. It is also revealed that couples who live in rural areas are more likely to use pet names than those who live in urban areas. Educated people also use pet names more than those who are not educated.

3. Research Method

This research applied document or content analysis. Content analysis is a research method applied to written or visual materials to identify specified characteristics of the material (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker et al., 2014). The research is done under the umbrella of the qualitative method which relies on text and applies unique steps in the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The data used in this research are a list of common names from Oxford Learner's Dictionary 7th edition. The list consists of 443 names consisting of 241 female names and 202 male names. However, this research did not use all the names. The names used in the research are the ones whose nicknames end with either -y or -ie as listed in the dictionary. There is a total of 62 names (30 female names and 32 male names). In addition to the 62 names, there are 34 extra that are obtained through various websites on the internet. The data are categorized into three groups: the nicknames that come from the first syllable, the nicknames that do not come from the first syllable, and the nicknames that can come from both syllables. The fourth and final category consists of nicknames that are derived from adjectives that some people may use as an endearment to other people they are close with.

4. Discussion

The existing data are categorized into four types, namely first-syllable nicknames, non-first-syllable nicknames, first and second-syllable nicknames, and adjectives people use to nickname their closest ones. The data are categorized based on the form the nicknames come from and adjectives people use to call their closest friends.

4.1 First Syllable nicknames

This first category consists of names whose nicknames come from the first syllable of the names. According to the Oxford Advanced English Dictionary 7th edition, there are 51 names whose nicknames come from the first syllable of the name. Those nicknames are *Abigail, Caroline/ Carolyn, Catherine/ Katherine/ Katharine/ Kathryn, Christina, Constance, Deborah, Eleanor, Georgina, Gillian, Jacqueline, Jennifer, Josephine, Judith, Kirsten, Margaret, Nicola, Patricia, Penelope, Rose, Rosemary, Sandra, Susan, Susannah, Suzanne, Victoria,* and *Winnifred* for the female names. The male names are *Alfred, Andrew, Archibald, Bernard, Charles, Daniel, Edward, Frederic, Gerald, Jeremy, John, Joseph, Kenneth, Laurence / Lawrence,*

Leonard, Michael, Nicholas, Oliver, Randolph/ Randolf, Raymond, Richard, Robert, Ronald, Samuel, Terrence, and *William.*

Gathered from various sources, some names are not in the dictionary, but the nicknames also come from the first syllable of the name. Those names are *Adeline, Allison, Amelia, Angelina / Angela, Arthur, Cameron, Cassandra, Dolores, Dorothy, Emily, Evelyn, Gabriella, Gustave, Isabela, Jessica, Jonathan, Kimberly, Luciana, Maximillian, Michele, Reginald, Sophia, Stephanie, Theodore. Theresa/ Teresa, Timothy, Tobias, Walter,* and *Zachary*.

The name Abigail whose nickname is Abbie comes from the first syllable and second syllable of the name. It is then modified with the suffix -ie, creating the nickname, *Abbie*. For the name *Caroline* whose nickname is Carrie, the nickname comes from the first syllable of the name and then is added the suffix -ie at the end of it. A similar variation to *Caroline* is *Carolyn*, which nickname comes from the first syllable of the name too and then the suffix -ie is added at the end.

The name 'Catherine' however, has some variations of the name itself, including *Catherine/ Katherine/ Katharine/ Kathryn*. These variations result in a variety of nicknames too, which are *Cathy, Kathy, Kate, Katie, and Katy*. These variations share the same characteristics, which they all come from the first syllable of the name, and then the suffixes -ie or -y is added to the first syllable of the name to form the nickname.

The other first name in this category is *Georgina* whose nicknames are *Georgie* and *Ginny*. The first nickname *Georgie* comes from the first and second syllable of the name, and instead of ending with the name itself, the name is modified with the suffix -ie to create the name, *Georgie*. The other nickname, *Ginny*, comes from modifying the first letter of the name. Instead of using the construction of the original name, it is modified with *-inn* and then added the suffix -y to make the nickname *Ginny*.

4.2 Non-First-Syllable Nicknames

This category explains nicknames that come from either the second syllable or third syllable of the name. The first example is the name *Alexandra* whose nickname is *Sandy*. It comes from the third syllable of the name, spelt *-xand* but pronounced *sand*, and then added the suffix -y to create the nickname *Sandy*. Other names that belong in this category include *Amanda, Rebecca, Samantha, and Anthony* (another variation includes *Antony*). For *Amanda*, the nickname is *Mandy*, which comes from the second syllable of the name, *mand*, and then the suffix -y is added to create *Mandy*. The nickname for the name *Rebecca* comes from the second syllable of the name, *bec*. The suffix -y is then added, but a minor modification is made in the nickname, turning it into *Becky* instead of *Beccy*. A 'k' is added to it before the suffix -y.

The next name in this category is *Samantha* whose nickname is *Sammy*. It comes from the first syllable of the name, *Sam*. An additional *m* was added before the suffix -y to create *Sammy*. Finally, the name *Anthony* or *Antony*'s nickname is simply using the last second and third syllable of the nickname, *Tony*. Although the name is spelt *Anthony,* its nickname is using the spelling of *Tony* instead of *Thony*. The next name in this category is *Augustus* and *Augusta* whose nickname is *Gussie. Gussie* came from the second syllable of the nickname, which both share the same which is *-gus*. It is modified with an extra *s* before the suffix -ie to create the nickname. The name *Veronica* whose nickname is *Ronnie* comes from modifying the second and third syllable of the name and then adding the suffix -ie to create the nickname, *Ronnie*.

In addition to non-first-syllable nicknames, there is one more group in which nicknames come from modifying almost the entire name and only root in the first letter of the name. For example, the name *Henry* has the nickname of *Harry.* It comes only from the first letter of the name, and then the whole nickname is only adapted from the letter *r.* The next name is *James* whose nickname includes *Jimmy* and *Jamie. Jamie* may still come from the first syllable of the name, but the name *Jimmy* is modified based on the first letter of the name. The name *Patrick* has the nickname *Paddy* which comes from the first syllable but then is completely modified. The name *Thomas*'s nickname is *Tommy*. There is a slight change in the spelling, but it is still modified from the first syllable of the name.

4.3 First and Second Syllable Nickname

Some names can have their nicknames come from both first and second syllables. The names in this category are *Elizabeth* (the other variation includes *Elisabeth), Robert, Mackenzie,* and *Miranda.*

For example, the name *Elizabeth* can be called *Lizzie or Lizzy.* The nicknames come from the second syllable of the name, *-liz,* which then is modified with an additional *z* before the suffix -ie or -y, creating *Lizzie* or *Lizzy.* The next name in this category is Robert, which can be called either *Robbie* (the other variation includes *Robby*) or *Bobbie* (the other variation includes *Bobby*). For the name *Robbie* or *Robby*, the nickname comes from the first syllable of the name, *Rob* which is then modified with an extra *b* before the suffix -ie and -y, creating the two variations of the nickname.

For the name Mackenzie, the nickname can be either *Macey* or *Kenzie. Macey* comes from the first syllable of the nickname, *ma* which then is modified a little, turning it into *Macey.* It takes the *c* from the name, and then an *e* is added before using the suffix -y in creating the name *Macey.* The second nickname comes directly from the second syllable of the name, *Kenzie.* The suffix -ie has been a part of the name itself, it was not an addition to the name. With the name *Miranda*, the nickname can be either *Mandy* or *Andy. Mandy* comes from the *m* at the beginning of the name which modifies the *-anda* at the end of the name. Instead of *Manda*, it is *Mandy* with the suffix -y at the end of the nickname. The nickname *Andy* also comes from the last syllable of the name, except, it does not use the *m* from the beginning of the name. Both names used the suffix -y in the nicknames.

4.4 Adjectives-based nickname

This category comes from analyzing some adjectives that can be used to call someone one is close. The suffix -y or -ie sometimes change the category of the word, from adjectives to nouns. For instance, the word 'sweetie' originally comes from the adjective 'sweet' and with the suffix -ie, it changes category into a noun and shows endearment. Other than endearment, this modification from an adjective to a noun by using the suffix -ie or -y may also produce a nickname or how to call a certain group. Take 'lefty' as an example. According to Oxford English Dictionary, 'lefty' could mean someone left-handed or a supporter of the political left. The word 'lefty' comes from the original adjective 'left.' The addition of the suffix -y changes the word category from the adjective 'left' into the noun 'leftie.'

The other nouns that will show endearment are nouns that show a relationship with the family. Examples include the word 'auntie', 'mommy', 'daddy', 'sissy', and 'granny'. The word 'auntie' comes from 'aunt' and the additional '-ie' makes it sounds

more like endearment and not as stiff as just 'aunt'. The word 'mommy', 'daddy', and 'sissy' also shows the endearment of a mother, father, and sister. 'Granny' is the endearment of a grandmother. Other examples are 'wifey' and 'hubby' which show endearment for wife and husband respectively. For terms of endearment for a brother, there is the term 'broey' although it is rare and barely used. The term comes from the root 'bro' which is informal to call for a brother or someone with brotherly relationships. It is then modified with an *e* and then the suffix -y.

Another endearment in this category is 'bestie' which comes from the word 'best' which indicates a best friend. The word 'best' is modified using the suffix -ie to change the word category from an adjective into a noun (specifically a nickname).

Some other examples involve animals in it, such as 'doggy, horsey, birdie' and 'goatie'. All the roots for those words are animals; they are dog, horse, bird, and goat respectively. They all are modified with the suffix -ie to create the nickname. A cat, however, is usually called 'kitty' instead of 'catty.' 'Kitty' means a cat and is usually used to call a cat such as 'come here kitty!' Meanwhile, 'catty' serves a different meaning. It is not a nickname for a cat; rather, it is an adjective that describes a trait of saying unkind things about people.

5. Conclusion

From the discussion on the different nicknames and adjectives that can be used as nicknames, there are some similar patterns in all the names. The first one, if the root of the name where the nickname is coming from ends with a consonant, it is very likely that it will require an additional letter of that consonant before adding either the suffix -y or -ie. The examples include the nickname *Debbie, Patty, Penny, Maggie, Eddie, Freddie, Danny, Jerry, Larry, Ollie, Ronnie, Sammy, Lizzy/Lizzie, Jimmy, Tommy, Addiem Ellie, Emmy, Kimmy, Millie, and Timmy*.

Second, the nicknames that come from adjectives also require an additional letter before adding the suffix -ie or -y before they become nicknames. This category includes *sweetie, fluffy, hottie,* and *skinny*. This also applies to the family-relation nickname. This category includes *Daddy, Mommy, Granny,* and *Sissy*.

When it comes to nicknaming practice, English tends to use the root from the name itself or adjectives that describe the person being nicknamed. Compared to other languages, there is less of a cultural aspect in English than in other languages. For example, Vanzolini (2019) researched the onomastics in Aweti. In Brazil, many people have family names, nicknames, and what they call 'white people's names.' In their case, nicknames are always given by other people, just like the rest of the world. What is unique about Aweti is that someone might get nicknamed either after their family name or the nickname of another person. For instance, a girl could be called by the name of a much older woman that resided in another part of the village or a completely different village.

Dziwirek (2019) researched familial terms of address in Polish. The results show that Polish people are more child-directed when it comes to calling the children, such as calling their children *daughter, son,* and *child*. Polish parents relish the fact that someone is their child and convey their love through those words. The researcher compared this characteristic with American and English parents who called their children using their first names, the diminutives of the names, nicknames, and terms of endearments.

In African society, their naming systems are influenced by different socio-cultural factors, where language and culture have great influences on name-giving (Mokala, 2017). It is explained that in Basotho, like in most African societies, the naming system must follow a certain trajectory that reflects their belief systems and cultural heritage. They believe that names are loaded with meaning. The naming system they have is a reflection of their cultural dynamics.

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Appendix 1: Female names from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Name	Nickname
Abigail	Abbie
Alexandra	Sandy
Amanda	Mandy
Caroline/Carolyn	Carrie, Carly
Catherine/Katherine/Katharine/Kathryn	Cathy, Kathy, Kate, Katie, Katy
Christina	Chrissie
Constance	Connie
Deborah	Debbie
Eleanor	Ellie
Elizabeth, Elisabeth	Betsy, Betty, Lizzie/Lizzy
Georgina	Georgie, Ginny
Gillan	Jilly
Jacqueline	Jackie
Jennifer	Jenny
Josephine	Josie
Judith	Judy
Kirsten	Kirstie/Kirsty
Margaret	Maggie, Peggy
Nicola	Nicky
Patricia	Patty
Penelope	Penny
Rebecca	Becky
Rose	Rosie
Rosemary	Rosie
Samantha	Sammy
Sandra	Sandy
Susan	Susie, Suzy
Susannah, Suzanne	Susie, Suzy
Victoria	Vickie, Vicky
Winnifred	Winnie

Appendix 2: Male names from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Name	Nickname
Alfred	Alfie
Andrew	Andie/Andy
Anthony, Antony	Tony
Archibald	Archie
Bernard	Bernie
Charles	Charlie
Daniel	Danny
Edward	Eddie, Eddy
Frederick	Freddie, Freddy
Gerald	Jerry, Gerry
Henry	Harry
James	Jimmy, Jamie
Jeremy	Jerry
John	Johnny
Joseph	Joe
Kenneth	Kenny
Laurence, Lawrence	Larry, Laurie
Leonard	Lenny
Michael	Micky, Mickey
Nicholas	Nicky
Oliver	Ollie
Patrick	Paddy
Randolph, Randolf	Randy
Raymond	Ray
Richard	Ricky, Ritchie
Robert	Robbie, Bobby
Ronald	Ronnie
Samuel	Sammy
Terrence	Terry
Thomas	Tommy
William	Willy

Appendix 3: Other names gathered from various internet sources

Name	Nickname
Adeline	Addie
Allison	Ally
Amelia	Allie, Ally, Amy, Millie
Angelina, Angela	Angie
Arthur	Artie
Augustus, Augusta	Gussie
Cameron	Cammy
Cassandra	Cassie, Sandy
Dolores / Dorothy	Dottie
Emily	Emmy
Evelyn	Evie
Gabriella	Gaby
Gustave	Gussie
Isabela	Izzy
Jessica	Jessie
Jonathan	Jonny
Kimberly	Kimmy
Luciana	Lucy
Mackenzie	Kenzie, Macey
Maximilian	Maxie
Michelle	Michie
Miranda	Mandy, Andy
Reginald	Reggie
Sophia	Sophie
Stephanie	Stevie
Theodore	Teddy
Theresa/Teresa	Terry
Timothy	Timmy
Tobias	Toby
Veronica	Ronnie
Walter	Wally
Zachary	Zacky