

## Optimal Hypocoristic Names in Kurdish

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### Extended Abstract

#### 1-Introduction

The process of hypocoristic truncation refers to a process which includes the reduction of a proper name to a shortened form. In this process, the initial parts are mainly retained, and the final ones are truncated. These truncated names are mainly applied in intimate situations as a nickname or a term of endearment. From the optimality perspective, the hypocoristic formation is mainly based on the priority of markedness constraints over faithfulness constraints. In fact, the phonological identity of input forms and output ones (the constraint of faithfulness) is suppressed in favor of unmarked syllabic structures (markedness constraints). Although this phonological process has been under scrutiny in many languages, no research has been conducted in Kurdish language yet. Therefore, the present study aims at investigating some data in Kurdish language with reliance on the optimality theory in order to explain the phonological constraints responsible for making Kurdish hypocoristic names.

#### 2- Methodology

The methodology of the present paper is based on the optimality theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993). The fundamental concepts of this theory include markedness, faithfulness, constraint, and ranking. According to this theory, the linguistic structure is influenced by two fundamental competing forces: the markedness force acts in line with producing different types of unmarked structures; while, the faithfulness force functions in line with preserving lexical contrast (Kager, 1999; McCarty, 2008). In other words, faithfulness necessitates the congruency of output forms with the input ones, while markedness imposes a pressure to produce unmarked structures (Kager, 1999). Constraints have a particular ranking in each language which varies drastically from one language to another (McCarty, 2008). Violating each constraint is influenced by its particular ranking in the language (Kager, 1999). The higher the rank of a constraint is, the more its influence on phonetic environments is (Dekker,

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Vandekerckhove, & VandeWeijer, 2000). Violating constraints with lower ranks along with observing and keeping constraints with high ranks result in optimal structures.

In the optimality phonology, the process of making hypocoristic names is also explained as the domination of markedness constraints over faithfulness ones (Hong, 2006). Markedness constraints exert a pressure to produce the optimal syllables in the hypocoristic names; nevertheless, Faithfulness constraints tend to make a congruency between the underlying input and the output of the hypocoristic form (Nelson, 1998). Due to the domination of markedness constraints, hypocoristic names prefer to delete a few consonants and vowels in favor of an optimal syllabic structure. Concerning this perspective, we try to clarify the dynamics of constraints related to hypocoristic forms in Kurdish language.

### 3- Discussion and Analysis

When hypocoristic process is applied to proper names, it deletes some clusters and syllables, and then it adds different endings to them according to the gender. As far as feminine names are considered, the first consonant, the second vowel, and the third consonant remain unchanged in the truncation process, but the rest elements are deleted. Finally, the vowel /e:/ is added to the hypocoristic name which has now an optimal syllable structure of CV.CV. Regarding masculine names, the first consonant, the second vowel, and the third consonant are preserved in the truncation process, and the rest consonants and vowels are deleted. Finally, the suffix /-a/ is attached to the truncated forms:

1.  $\text{am} \rightarrow \text{am} [a]$        $\text{ra:be} \rightarrow \text{ra:b} [a]$
2.  $\text{fathola:} \rightarrow \text{fāt}[a]$        $\text{m(I)ka:il} \rightarrow \text{mk}[a]$

The hypocoristic formation in Kurdish is highly dependent on the constraints related to the syllable structure. That is, these truncated names are characterized by optimal syllables. In the mentioned examples, the faithfulness constraints (PARSE, Fill) are violated because of the deletion of final consonants and vowels, and also due to attaching vowels /-a/, /-e/ to the end of names. However, these phonetic modifications are employed for the sake of forming an unmarked syllabic structure. As a way of illustration, the markedness constraints of onset, no-coda, no complex coda, and no complex nucleus are satisfied at the cost of violating the faithfulness constraints. Therefore, the ranking of constraints are as follows:

3. Onset, No-coda, \*Complex coda, \*Complex onset >> Parse, Fill

Additionally, the anchor constraint is always applied to the left side of the names. Regarding this constraint, the left side of the hypocoristic name should always be matched with the left side of the underlying name. Violating this constraint results in ungrammaticality. In addition, the last constraint, having priority over all the other constraints, is as follows:

4. The middle vowel must not be at the nucleus of the first syllable of the hypocoristic names: \*mid vowel

The hierarchy of constraints related to the phonological structure of hypocoristic names can be illustrated as follows:

5. Onset, \*coda,\*mid-vowel, nuc,\*complex coda, complex onset >> left-anchoring>>right-anchoring, parse, fill

#### 4. Conclusion

By analyzing and investigating different cases of hypocoristic names in Kurdish from an optimality perspective, the following results were obtained: the hypocoristic names in this language include a highly optimal syllable structure. This optimal structure is made possible by the priority of markedness constraints over the faithfulness ones. The following ranking illustrates the hierarchy of constraints related to the hypocoristic names:

6. Onset, \*coda,\*mid-vowel, nuc,\*complex coda, complex onset >> left-anchoring>>right-anchoring, pars, fill

**Keywords:** Hypocoristic names, Optimal theory, Kurdish language, Constraint hierarchy, short vowel

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