

“You’re a good friend, bro!”¹

A Corpus-based Investigation of the Meanings of *bro*²

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1. Introduction

Non-concatenative processes in general seem to be devoted less attention in the morphological literature than other ways of creating new words. The reason may be that these are both more arbitrary and less productive than more widely researched word-creating mechanisms; therefore they might present problems in a statistical analysis, and obviously it is more difficult to draw consequences in terms of regularities that can normally be observed in connection with other techniques. However, their place in English word-formation is unquestionable, since one can find new formations from time to time, and even if it may take more time for these to be more accepted by speakers, or to be entered in dictionaries, it would be a mistake not to discuss them.

One of the processes that do not add anything to the base but even truncate it is clipping. This mechanism is exemplified in the present paper. According to traditional views, clipping is fairly capricious in nature, compared to other word-formation processes; there are very few, if any restrictions that apply to it. Nevertheless, there are regular tendencies that can be observed, which are more or less accepted in the literature. One instance of clipping is discussed in details here, namely the word *bro*_N, created from the base *brother*_N. This formation can be heard more and more often on American television shows, especially sitcoms. Therefore, it inevitably occurs more frequently in actual language use. However, *bro* does not seem to refer to genetic relation as its base, but there is a shift in the meaning of this word. The paper investigates whether *bro* is more often used in the sense ‘friend’, rather than in reference to genetic relation. It may be of interest whether there are other clipped words that may have developed slightly different senses, such as *disco*_N that can refer to a “club or party at which people dance to pop music”, or the “lighting and sound equipment used at a

1 Source: Corpus of Contemporary American English (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>)

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disco” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/disco?q=disco>). Further details on clipping and *bro* are discussed in what follows.

After the introduction, the second section introduces clipping itself; its mechanism, variations, and the different approaches that are available in the literature. The next section of the paper investigates the clipped word *bro*; how it is connected to the different senses of *brother* and a brief account is given on the possible cognitive linguistic interpretation of such a formation. The fourth section analyses data drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), to underpin the assumption that there is a tendency of meaning change in the case of *bro*. The last, fifth section concludes.

2. Clipping: an overview

The essence of clipping is that it shortens a lexeme, i.e. it is a non-concatenative process (cf. Bauer 1993, Bauer 2006, Brinton 2000, Katamba 2003, Kreidler 2000, Lieber 2010, and Marchand 1960), e.g. *non-con*_N ← *nonconformist*_N. We can distinguish three different types of clipping: fore-clipping, whereby the first part of the base word is deleted (*plane*_N ← *airplane*_N); back-clipping truncates the last part of the source (*disco*_N ← *discotheque*_N), and Bauer (2006) terms ‘ambiclippling’ when both the first and the last parts are clipped (*fridge*_N ← *refrigerator*_N). Clipping is not to be confused with back-formation (BF), whereby an affix-like element is deleted, as in this case the resemblance to an affix is not a prerequisite. A popular example of BF is *edit*_V ← *editor*_N, whereby an “agentive-like” element is deleted. Interestingly enough this process can be considered “anti-iconic in the sense that an increase of semantic complexity occurs with a decrease of formal complexity” (Nagano 2008: 180), e.g. *jelly*_N → *jell*_V ‘turn into jelly’. The semantics of BF requires further research; since it is not in the scope of this paper, it is not discussed here in more details. Regarding clipping, the truncation of a certain part (or parts) of a word does not mean that semantic content is added to the clipped element (Bauer 1993, Bauer 2006, Brinton 2000, Huddleston and Pullum 2005, and Katamba 2003). This may account for the fact that the clipped word belongs to the same part of speech as its source (Bauer 1993, Brinton 2000), e.g. *par*_N ← *paragraph*_N.

After considering these points it is justified to ask why clipping is a productive process at all, since as McCarthy (2002) explains it is not possible to form words with exactly identical meaning due to what he terms “semantic blocking”. He claims that even in synonyms, differences can be detected: “at first sight, pairs of exact synonyms are easy to find [...] on closer examination one finds [...] that they are not after all completely

interchangeable” and he brings the example that “one cannot substitute *almost* for *nearly* in the phrase *not nearly* meaning ‘far from’, as in *I’m not nearly ready yet*” (91). The distinction in clipped forms lies in stylistics, as a word that underwent clipping is less likely to occur in a formal context (Bauer 1993, Bauer 2006, Brinton 2000, Huddleston and Pullum 2005, and Lieber 2010). Marchand (1960) goes further and says that it is not only a stylistically interesting phenomenon, but “a change of emotional background” (357), and utilizes *Mex* ← *Mexican* to illustrate his point. However, Jespersen (1954) adds that as clipped forms are getting integrated into everyday language use, they tend to lose their status of being considered slang, and indeed everyday speakers may not be fully aware of the fact that such formations as *fax*_N ← *facsimile*_N, *piano*_N ← *pianoforte*_N, and *cello*_N ← *violoncello*_N are actually clipped words. Moreover, it is added by Marchand (1960) and Kleider (2000) that these words also lose the connection with the source word. In certain cases they even may occur more frequently in modern usage than the original one, as is witnessed by the data extracted from COCA (note that the data collected date back to 1990):

Source Word	Number of Occurrences	Clipped Word	Number of Occurrences
telephone	20972	phone	76478
cabriolet	88	cab	6689
pantaloon	85	pants	13922

Table 1—COCA data

As it is illustrated by *Table 1*, in the case of already established words, the clipped form is more common. This may not be the case however, with fairly new formations. The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) shows interesting variations in the frequency of these words. In the case of *telephone* and *phone* the former far outnumbers the latter between the 1900s and the 1950s; *telephone* returns 11487, while *phone* only 5826 hits. This is not the case however with *pants* and *cab*, as both of the words appear more times than their original forms. From the 1900s to the 1950s, *cab* occurs 2559, while *cabriolet* only 38 times. The frequency of *pants* compared to *pantaloon* is 2131 in the case of *pants*, and 124 of *pantaloon*. The only occasion that *cabriolet* was more frequent than *cab* was in the 1830s, according to this corpus. There are more instances of *pantaloon* than *pants* from the 1830s to the 1850s. It has to be added that to provide reliable data, these hits should be discussed more thoroughly, as it will be obvious from the detailed discussion of *bro*.

It is also a widespread view that clipping is most frequently used as jargon, i.e. clipped words are mostly created by certain groups of people, e.g. in schools (cf. Jespersen 1954, Lieber 2010, and Plag 2005). This is supported by numerous formations that are related to different occupations, for instance *lab*_N ← *laboratory*_N, *prof*_N ← *professor*_N, *doc*_N ← *doctor*_N. It has to be added that these instances are fairly common in everyday use, although there may be formations that are not widespread and hence they are only used and understood by certain people.

Concerning the potential bases for clipping, it is noted by Kreidler (2000) that mostly nouns serve as sources, and by Marchand (1960) that verbs are hardly ever shortened by this process.

Concerning the restrictions on the base words and the exact operation of clipping there is not such an agreement within the literature dealing with this process. Bauer (1993) notes that “it does not seem to be predictable how many syllables will be retained in the clipped form [...] whether the stressed syllable from the base lexeme will be included or not” (233), and Jespersen (1954) also claims that in this case stress does not have a significant role. According to Quirk (1985: 1580), this formation starts from what he calls the “graphic form”, and this means that neither phonological, nor semantic properties should be taken into consideration. Brinton (2000) says that clipping “does usually reflect phonological processes, selecting the longest possible syllable, what is called a maximal syllable...” (99), however in the case of *ad*_N ← *advertisement*_N or *flu*_N ← *influenza*_N, it does not seem to be the case. Harley (2006) notes that clippings usually retain the syllable that has the main stress, yet there are numerous exceptions to this assumption as well, cf. [fəʊn]_N ← [ˈtɛlɪfəʊn]_N, [ˈdɛməʊ]_N ← [dɛmənˈstreɪfən]_N, [kənˈfæb]_N ← [kənˈfæbjʊˈleɪfən]_N.

Berg (2011) notes that traditional approaches to clipping do not grasp the regularities concerning its formation and believes that there are certain generalizations that can be drawn in relation to this process; more precisely he examines the probability of the application of fore-clipping or back-clipping and finds that factors such as stress pattern, length and lexical class have influence in this connection. He considers back-clipping “unmarked” compared to fore-clipping and states that the “probability of fore-clipping increases when the initial syllable of the base lexeme is unstressed [...], when the base lexeme is proper [...] noun and when the base lexeme is trisyllabic...” (Berg 2011: 10); these assertions were made on the basis of the extensive data that were analysed. The preponderance of back-clipping is also

explained by the fact that the beginning of a word seems to have more role in its recognition than the last part of it.

Bauer (2006: 499) draws attention to an interesting point, namely that clipped words can be further suffixed, and brings examples from Australian English, such as *barbie*_N ← *barbecue*_N. If a word formed by such a process can be affixed, it may indicate that it is fairly entrenched in the speakers’ mind as its properties may be well-established, which is necessary to determine what kind of affixes can be added to it to form further new words. It may be of interest to demonstrate it with *bro*, which is in the scope of investigation in this paper. The Urban Dictionary proves to be an excellent source to find the affixed forms of *bro*:

broish

This describes people and activities which resemble a good brother or something a good brother would do. It includes favours, good deeds, trust, patience, and generosity. It is derived from the idea of brotherly love.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=broish&defid=4236419> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

unbro

(adj.) 1. An action or event that is unbecoming of a bro. An action or event that a friend would not be a part of or make another suffer through. 2. In the case of an action, there are usually negative effects on others. 3. With an event, the persons involved will likely be miserable throughout said event.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=unbro> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

disbro

When a bro breaks bro code several times, so the bros go forth and disbro him.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=disbro> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

broette

A girl who is clearly a bro and participates in bro-like activities.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Broette&defid=4862634> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

Figure 1 – affixed forms of bro

Bro enters into other processes which may be a further evidence of its frequent and not extraordinary use in present-day English:

bro-llenium

An extremely eventful night spent with bro's.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Bro-llenium%20&defid=3774795> Accessed: 5 May 2014)

she-bro

She-bro, one of the female gender who has committed bro-like acts.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=she-bro&defid=4130632> Accessed: 5 May 2014)

bro'in up

to grow up in a bro-like fashion. To be a more experienced bro.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bro%27in%20up&defid=6416619> Accessed: 5 May 2014)

Figure 2 – other lexical processes bro participates in

Martin (2013) claims that *bro* “has taken on new life as a productive element forming new words and compounds...” It goes without saying that in all these formations *bro* is to be understood in the sense ‘friend’. However, it has to be noted that Internet sources are not fully reliable; even for one word we can find several definitions that may differ. This suggests that a fully grounded meaning cannot be assigned to these items; nevertheless their existence cannot be denied and it can be assumed that at some point they may become established in the language. Apparently, *bro* enters into blend-type constructions with some other word, e.g. *bromance*; Martin (2013) also mentions compounds such as *bro-hug*. She explains its popularity as a tool for forming new words by the fact that it includes an “instantly

recognizable consonant cluster” and a fact that no paper written on *bro* can ignore: it has been widely popularized by the American sitcom, *How I Met Your Mother*.

3. The birth of *bro*

The base of the clipped word *bro*_N, *brother*_N has been in language use from very early times, as the Online Etymology Dictionary notes, it stems from the Proto-Indo-European form, **bhrater*. If we take a closer look to the entry of *brother* in the OED2, it becomes apparent that apart from its central meaning, that is “the son of the same parents”, there are other meanings as well. These different ones are getting further and further from the original one, as the selection from the OED2 shows:

- a) “one who has either parent in common with another” (656)
- b) “including more distant kin: A kinsman, as uncle, nephew, cousin” (1382)
- c) “said affectionately of one regarded or treated as a brother; one who fills the place of a brother” (1795)
- d) “a familiar mode of address to a man, esp. one whose name is not known” (1912)

Figure 3 – meanings of bro in OED2

The dates in brackets following the citations indicate the date of the first occurrence registered in the OED2, and this also shows how the different senses developed through centuries. In this sense, *bro* differs from the group of clipped word that has been mentioned above, as not all clipped words change meaning, e.g. *raccoon* → *coon*.

In the case of *bro*, OED2 only says that it is a colloquial form of *brother*, what is more interesting however, is that the first instantiation of it dates back to 1666: “Evelyn Diary [...] I accompanyd my Eldest Bro (who then quitted Oxford) into the Country”. According to Martin (2013), the modification of the meaning took place by the 1970s. In this connection the Urban Dictionary has more information; there are 228 definitions of the word. Some of them are rather general, but we can find many specific descriptions of how present-day speakers imagine a *bro*:

- a) “friend; commonly used in greetings”
(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Bro&defid=1730153>
Accessed: 4 May 2014)
- b) “Bros ruin everything they touch. They are deeply racist, yet vulture-ize black culture with attempts to be "down", while living as far from any ghetto as humanly possible. It's because they seek danger, or the illusion of it.”

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Bro&defid=2572187>)

Accessed: 5 May 2014)

- c) an 18 to 24 year-old male who wears birkenstock sandals, watches family guy, plays ultimate frisbee, and wears an upside-down visor or a baseball cap with a pre-frayed brim, you know, a bro

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bro&defid=4134552>)

Accessed: 5 May 2014)

- d) A friend who puts other friends before girls, with many smaller requirements, as defined in the bro code.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bro&defid=4529812>)

Accessed 4 May 2014)

- e) Short for "brother". A way of addressing virtually anybody. Used much the same way as "bud", "buddy", "dude", or "man". Originally pronounced "bruh", nowadays it usually rhymes with "snow".

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bro&defid=1457255>)

Accessed: 5 May 2014)

Figure 4 – descriptions of a bro

Even if the fact that *bro* is a clipping means that it is a rather colloquial expression, it would not necessarily mean that there is a modification in meaning. However, as these definitions suggest, it seems to be the case that *bro* is not used to refer to a relative, but rather to a close friend. In this sense it is rather related to (*Figure 3c*) meaning of the base word. It also has to be recognised that definition (*Figure 3d*) is basically the same as (*Figure 4e*), therefore it seems that this kind of meaning of *brother* is part of *bro* too.

It also has to be mentioned that *bro* is mainly related to American English as is highlighted by the following dictionary entries from the Internet:

- a) chiefly *North American* A friendly greeting or form of address

(<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bro?q=bro> Accessed: 28 May 2014)

- b) mainly US informal used when talking to a male friend

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/bro?q=bro> Accessed: 28 May 2014)

- c) *American English* a way of greeting a friend

(<http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/bro> Accessed: 28 May 2014)

Figure 5 – bro and American English

The Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE) makes it possible compare hits in connection with the frequency of words appearing in different dialects of English. Obviously there are different amounts of texts available from different ‘Englishes’; however, an average is given in each case. The following data can be found:

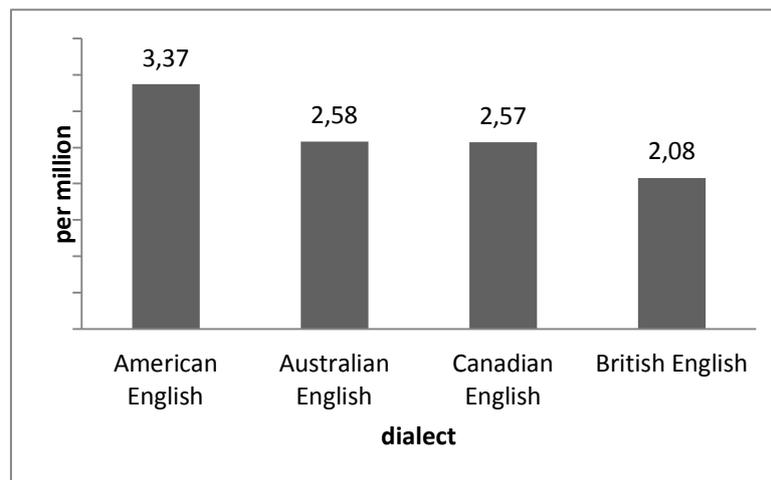


Figure 6 – Relative hits of bro in GloWbE for different dialects

The data suggests that bro occurs in American English in the biggest proportion. In the following section the frame that may have led to the creation of *bro* is discussed.

It may be worth mentioning the cognitive linguistic term, “idealised cognitive model” (ICM), which is “a relatively stable mental representation that represents a ‘theory’ about some aspect of the world and to which words and other linguistic units can be relativized” (Evans 2007: 104). Croft and Cruise (2004) bring the example of BACHELOR, a notion defined in classical accounts as an ADULT UNMARRIED MALE. They find it problematic to define whether for instance the Pope belongs to this category. It is noted that the essence of the whole framework of ICMs is that it is an “idealized version of the world that simply does not include all possible real-world situations” (28). The definition of BROTHER should be then a MALE CHILD OF THE SAME PARENTS. Lakoff (1987) explains how the concept of MOTHER is built up from different models, for instance the genetic model means that “the female who contributes to the genetic material is the mother” (74), and that there are deviations because for instance a *stepmother* does not conform to this criterion. So it seems that one does not have to be genetically related to another person and yet she may belong under the concept of MOTHER, because the “concept *mother* is not clearly defined, once and for all, in terms of

common necessary and sufficient conditions" (76); it seems to be determined on the basis of converging models.

Something similar may be the case with BROTHER. Normally, a genetic relationship is assumed between two persons to be referred to as 'brothers', however there are other aspects of BROTHER that are relevant and in *bro* these may be emphasized and not the genetic one that seems to be related to the most central definition of *brother*. But even in the (Figure 3c) and (Figure 3d) definitions of *brother*, it is possible that the person one refers to as *brother* is not genetically related at all. Therefore, we could draw parallels between BROTHER and BRO, in the sense of 'friend'. The traditional aspects of brotherhood may apply to friends as well, and yet there may be some difference in the relationship of two persons when one is called a *friend*, or a *bro*. I assume that in this case *bro* means a closer relationship than *friend*.

4. *Bro*: a corpus-based investigation

In this section an extensive set of data is presented that is drawn chiefly from COCA. Not surprisingly, *brother* occurs much more frequently in the corpus, 49331 times whereas there are only 677 hits returned to *bro*. The paper focuses on the justification that *bro* is more often used in the sense 'friend' than in its original, most central meaning. To support this claim *bro* was investigated in the COCA from 2000 to 2012. As the distribution of the word in terms of genre was not the scope of the investigation such a distinction was not made in the entries.

Altogether 455 tokens were taken into consideration. They were categorized in three groups, one of them containing instances in which *bro* means 'friend', the second group consisted of texts that include *bro* in the 'brother' sense, and in the last one those cases were included where neither of the first two meanings could be traced back, or another sense was visible.

Those cases that were left uncategorized include such examples where the original source of the extracted text could not be found; therefore it would have been invalid to add them to either of the other groups. In some cases *bro* turned out to be a personal name; both last names and nicknames could be found, moreover it occurred as the name of a company e.g.:

- a) "You might have seen Brian " Bro " Brosdahl fishing on several TV shows..."
(COCA)
- b) "Lynn Bro is president of the trade group that represents DC Restaurants."
(COCA)

- c) “When Carly presses for an explanation as to why Rosanna wants her to work at BRO...” (COCA)

Figure 7 – examples for uncategorized hits

Another instance that occurred comparatively frequently was *brother* but in a religious context and due to its highly specific meaning the hits containing these expressions were also included in this category.

In the other two categories it was mostly the context of the word that provided help in deciding which category the specific instantiations belong to, e.g.:

1. ‘Friend’

- a) “It’s easy to see why Rydor is loved around town-why he’s “ everybody’s bro, “ honest, reliable...” (COCA)
- b) “Ryan Cameron recently left Schrutt as a client after a decade but still talks to him regularly, calling him his “ bruddy, “ as in his bro and his buddy...” (COCA)
- c) “„Hey, bro, “ Sergio said as Rogelio passed us, assuming his usual position at the head of the pack.” Your mom leave for work early this morning?” (COCA)

2. ‘Brother’

- a) “My brother. Corey. Becker. [...] Oh yeah, I know Becker. He dropped out our senior year, though. He’s your bro?” (COCA)
- b) “A Snickers wrapper hit her on the chin. She picked it up and threw it back at her brother, Pete. “Pretty weak throw, bro. ”” (COCA)
- c) “Got a bro who’s sucking your savings dry or a sister trying to mastermind your love life? Straighten out family foibles with these no-fail fixes.” (COCA)

Figure 8 – examples for categorized hits

If the context did not prove to be sufficient enough in deciding which category a particular example should belong to, further evidence were collected, for instance the original source of the given hit was looked up.

After collecting the relevant data, the following figure can be used to represent the findings:

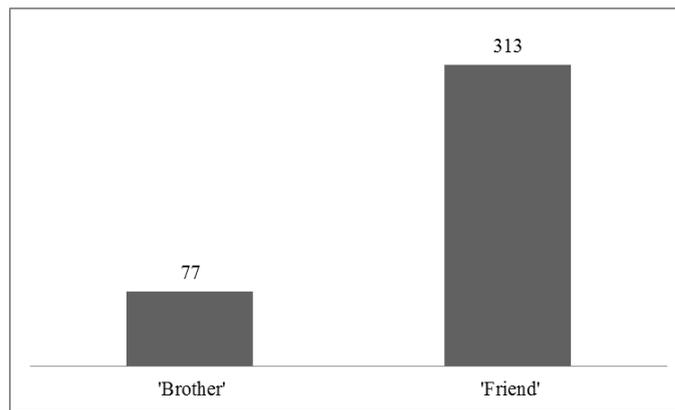


Figure 9 – ratio of “friend” and “brother” meanings of bro

As is illustrated in *Figure 9*, the sense ‘friend’ significantly outnumbers the other meaning, which also indicates that this meaning is more closely related not to the most central meaning of the original base, *brother* but to its broader sense.

A quick search in a popular online thesaurus, Thesaurus.com shows that there are more synonyms of *bro* that have a sense similar to ‘friend’, rather than to ‘brother’. These are for instance: *buddy*, *chum*, *mate*, *pal*, *sidekick*, etc. In terms of frequency, *buddy* significantly outnumbers *bro* with 9157 instances, similarly to *mate* with 6444 hits and *pal* with 3486. The others are represented less or roughly equal times. This difference in frequency, (apart from historical considerations that are not represented strongly in COCA, since the oldest texts are from 1990) may lie in the fact that certain synonyms of *bro* do not have strong or any relationship with another meaning of the word, cf. *pal*: “A comrade, mate, partner, associate, ‘chum’; an accomplice in crime or dishonesty.” Note however, that *mate* is also used in the meaning of the “sexual partner of a bird or other animal”³ and it is known in chess as well, which may also explain its relatively high number of occurrence.

One could assume that *bro* in the sense of ‘friend’ may potentially yield more synonyms because it may appear more frequently in colloquial language use. However, it is worth mentioning that if we observe more closely the synonyms listed above, we can see that although in different ways, *pal* and *buddy* both have some relation to concept of brotherhood. In the case of *pal*, both the OED and etymonline.com note that the word originates from Romany. In this language, *pal* means both ‘brother’ and ‘mate’, and it originates from a “variant of continental Romany *pral*, *plal*, *phral*, probably from Sanskrit *bhrata* “brother””⁴.

3 <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mate>

4 http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pal&allowed_in_frame=0

Once *pal* was borrowed it is obvious to presume that it could not be incorporated in the relatively fixed vocabulary of family membership which may have led to meaning modification.

The origin of *buddy* (and of its variant, *bud_N*) is less clear; according to the OED, it can be related simply to *brother*, or it is a variant of *butty_N*, meaning “confederate, companion, ‘mate’”. If the word is an alternation of *brother*, it is likely that it went through a similar process as *bro* did. This shows that apparently not *bro* is the only word that is originally related to the meaning ‘brother’ that was alternated for some reason to ‘friend’.

Finally another useful resource of investigating words is the WordandPhrase.Info, which provides among others the most frequent collocates of the entries. In the case of *bro*, these are the followings:

Verbs: *check, listen, drink, worry*

Nouns: *bro, baby, smash, deal, sis, solidarity, circus, garden*

Adjectives: *black, little, sorry, super, cool*

(<http://www.wordandphrase.info> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

Figure 10 – Most frequent collocates of *bro*

In comparison with this it might prove interesting to check what the collocates of *brother* are:

Verbs: *die, visit, marry, murder, inherit, tease, hug, spare, glare, betray*

Nouns: *sister, father, mother, twin, baby, kid, half*

Adjectives: *old, young, big, little, elder, Muslim, like, eldest, dear*

(<http://www.wordandphrase.info> Accessed: 4 May 2014)

Figure 11 – Most frequent collocates of *brother*

The webpage reveals that the two words have rather different collocates. It is the most transparent in the case of adjectives that even collocates of *bro_N* have a colloquial taste, e.g. *cool_A*, *super_A* in comparison with *brother_N*, e.g. *old_A*, *dear_A*.

Moreover, it shows that in terms of ICMs, which specific words may be related to the two terms. In the case of *brother*, we see more instances that may refer to the most central meaning of *brother* and at the same time to one of the most important points of it, that is being genetically related. This is underpinned by collocates such as, *father*, *mother*, *old*, *young*, *big*, etc. Of course, as it was mentioned in section 3, there may be deviations within a frame; most prototypically the ICM of BROTHER may imply blood-relation.

This is different even in the collocates of *bro*, in which case as was mentioned in section 3, there may be other elements highlighted within the ICM, and this is reflected in the collocates as well.

5. Conclusion

The main aim of the present paper was to justify that there is a shift in the meaning of *bro*_N, namely that even though it is clipped from *brother*_N that has the central meaning incorporating genetic relatedness as part of the whole concept, the meaning of the clipped word tends to be used in the sense 'friend'. In order to prove the hypothesis, data from the COCA corpus was used, which seem to support it, as there are more hits that show that there is such a shift in the meaning of *bro*. In cognitive linguistic terms, it seems that the flexibility of ICMs make it possible for such a formation to occur. Therefore, we can see that it is possible for *bro* to diverge in this way from the most central meaning of its base word, *brother*, and as witnessed by the data of COCA, it does tend to differ from it.

In relation to the process of clipping, the present results may have relevance in the sense that apart from the fact that when clipped words first enter everyday speech they can be considered colloquial, and that it may be problematic to give sharp boundaries concerning which part or parts are clipped, the issue of meaning should also be dealt with. As was mentioned in section 2, if we accept the existence of "semantic blocking" (McCarthy 2002), it may prove not to be reasonable to create words with exactly the same meaning that may be a stimulating factor for such divergence in meaning. Moreover, the data collected on *bro* seems to suggest that there may be a semantic change in certain clipped forms. As a possible goal for future research, it might be of interest to collect an extensive data of words created via clipping and determine if there are certain modifications in terms of meaning. It is not claimed that there may be sharp boundaries that can be drawn, i.e. the divergence in meaning could be measured on a scale, rather than in terms of clear-cut categories. The frequency of the words could also be considered as a factor, as more entrenched constructions are more likely to undergo modifications; suffixation and the appearance in compounds and other multi-word constructions may also be taken as evidence of the established status of the given clipped word.

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