English suffixhood revisited.
A construction morphology approach to the growing complexity of bases.

The bases of Present-day English derivatives can be much more complex than in any previous period of English, consider (1) to (7).

    (1) *more-high-table-than-High-Church-**er***   (*The Daily Telegraph* 1993)
    (2) group hugs and *I'll-be-there-for-you-**ing***   (*The Guardian* 2004)
    (3) *Do-we-need-to-know-this**ness***   (*The Guardian* 1998)
    (4) *off-the-wall**ish***   (*The Guardian* 1993)
    (5) *night-before-Christmass**y***   (*The Daily Telegraph* 2002)
    (6) a bit of royal *what-if-**ery***   (*The Guardian* 2005)
    (7) imperialism, elitism, and *all-bad-things-generally-**ism*** (*The Guardian* 1990)

All of the derivational suffixes in (1) to (7) have in common that they have scope over entire phrases. This feature has been pointed out in a number of handbooks on English morphology (cf. e.g.: Plag 2003; Bauer et al. 2013; Dixon 2014). In addition, when comparing several derivatives belonging to one of the constructional schemas (cf. Booij 2010: 51f.; Booij 2019: 387) it becomes evident that they are idiosyncratic: *bakery* 'place where a baker works' vs. *piggery* 'pigsty' vs. *what-if-ery* 'anticipation'. As the suffixes under investigation have scope over entire phrases, they have evolved clitic-like properties (cf. Ryder 1999, 2000 on -*er*). The increase in the complexity of bases undergoing derivation and the idiosyncrasies of the members of the suffix's schemas is thus highly systematic. Interestingly, both native, (1) to (5), and non-native, (6) and (7), suffixes are affected. Today, the most reliable function of the suffixes in (1) to (7) is their word-class assignment via default inheritance (sensu of Booij 2010: 27f.). Some recent corpus-based analyses have shed novel empirical light on phrases undergoing derivation by zooming in on one of these suffixes (cf. e.g.: Eitelmann, Haugland & Haumann 2020 for -*ish*; Lensch forthc. for -*er*). Crucially, all of the suffixes under scrutiny are productive in Present-day English. To this date, the systematicity and the mechanisms that have led the entire range of Present-day English suffixes represented in (1) to (7) to evolve their contemporary formal and functional properties remain a research gap.

      By way of a diachronic analysis of derivatives extracted from corpora comprised of prose fiction and newspaper data ranging from the Early Modern English period to the present day and a supplementary examination of dictionary entries, this paper shows that all of the contemporary properties of the suffixes can be accounted for by employing the framework of Construction Grammar. Phrasal derivatives are already attested in the Early Modern English period:

    (8) *Good-hous-wife**ry***   (Richard Bernard, *The Isle of Man* 1627)
    (9) *Good-for-nothing**ness***   (Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* 1741)

Thus, this study shows that most of the changes that have paved the way for the contemporary properties of the suffix's schemas clearly pre-date the digital age. Consequently, their occurrence cannot be attributed to the playfulness or the potential informality of netspeak. The diachronic account of derivatives illustrates that all of the suffixes have undergone constructional change (cf. Traugott & Trousdale 2013) which has led to schema growth: Host-class expansion has resulted in a diversification of the types of bases these suffixes can attach to and at the same time, semantic broadening has led to an increase in idiosyncrasy. This paper provides an empirical contribution to diachronic construction morphology and an update to our conception of English suffixation.

References:

Bauer, Bauer, Laurie; Lieber, Rochelle and Plag, Ingo (2013) *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Booij, Geert (2010) *Construction Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Booij, Geert (2019) "The Role of Schemas in Construction Morphology". *Word Structure* 12 (3): 385-395.

Dixon, Richard M. W. (2014) *Making New Words. Morphological Derivation in English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eitelmann, Matthias; Haugland, Kari and Haumann, Dagmar (2020) "From *Engl-isc* to *Whatever-ish*: A Corpus-based Investigation of *-ish*-Derivation in the History of English". *English Language and Linguistics,* 1-31.

Lensch, Anke (forthc.) "On *loners*, *easy-peelers*, *diggers-out*, *leaf clearer-uppers* and *stayer-onner-for-nowers*. Extravagance of *-er* nominalizations in English." In: Eitelmann, Matthias & Haumann, Dagmar (Hrsg.) *Extravagant Morphology*. Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing.

Plag, Ingo (2003) *Word-formation in English* (2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryder, Mary Ellen (1999) "*Bankers* and *Blue-chippers*. Of *-er* Nominalizations in Present-day English". *English Language and Linguistics* 3 (2): 269-297.

Ryder, Mary Ellen (2000) "Complex *-er* Nominals: Where Grammaticalization and Lexicalization Meet?". In: Contini-Morava, Ellen and Tobin, Yishai (eds.) *Between Grammar and Lexicon*, 291-332. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs and Trousdale, Graeme (2013) *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.