

Linguistics 201 – Fall 2006, Section F
November 1

Homework Assignment VII
Due: Monday, November 6, 2006 (beginning of class)

Fieldwork on Expletive Infixation

For this homework, you will need an informant who is a native speaker of English. “Informant” or “consultant” are terms used by linguist for native speakers of a language that provide them with the data that they can use to study that language.

Here the informants task is to construct novel words by the process of *expletive infixation*. Expletive infixation involves inserting an expletive word (typically “fuckin” for speakers of American English, or “bloody” for other varieties like British or Australian English) inside another word. For example:

fantastic	fan-fuckin-tastic
absolutely	abso-fuckin-lutely
Philadelphia	Phila-fuckin-delphia
Kalamazoo	Kalama-fuckin-zoo

Your task is to figure out what the rule is for where *fuckin* goes.

Here is how you should proceed:

(i) Come up with a first hypothesis based on your own intuitions. To do so, compare the words above with alternatives that don’t sound right, like:

- *fantas-fuckin-tic
- *absolute-fuckin-ly
- *Philadel-fuckin-phia
- *Ka-fuckin-lamazoo

That is, your initial hypothesis should be able to explain why you can say the first set of words, but not the second. (Hint: It’s nothing about the particular sounds here. Look no smaller than the level of syllables, and differences between the syllables.) State your hypothesis.

- (ii) Locate a native speaker of English as your informant.
- (iii) Do not tell your informant what you think the rule is!! Just give him a few examples of expletive insertion. Has she or he heard/used it?

(vi) Present the following words to the informant and write down where she or he would insert the expletive. That is they should give you pairs like Alabama – Ala-fuckin-bama (or simply mark the insertion place in the words below) etc.

Alabama	Tennessee	kangaroo	illegible	speedometer
lemonade	appendectomy	destroy	impossible	transcription
baboon	indifferent	gardenia	magnolia	thermometer
energetic	debris	trombone	economics	intellectual
illegal	librarian	distrust	discovery	orchestration
referee	beautician	bandana	Jessica	Adriano
Sofia	instantiate	everybody	emancipator	amalgamated
Hypocrite	kindergarden	anticipatory	necromancy	

Which cases are covered by your hypothesis, and which ones aren’t (mark them)?

How is your hypothesis holding up?

Extra credit:

What about the placement of *fuckin* in the following examples? Is there more than one option? Which one do / don’t you predict?

unbelievable underivable uncollectible undissuaded