

Lexical Creativity, Texts and Contexts

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Disregarding the usual front matter (lists of tables, figures and contributors), the book begins with the *Editor's preface*, followed by a longer *Introduction* written by Leonhard Lipka and entitled *Lexical creativity, textuality and problems of metalanguage*. The *Introduction* is useful since it presents the conceptual and terminological background for the whole work and also gives an overview of the chapters (what I found somewhat distracting was the extensive use of numerous abbreviations like *TTs* for “text-types” or *NUs* for “naming units”).

Next, we find four major parts, each containing at least two contributions. The titles of the parts are as follows: *Lexical creativity in discourse*, *Lexical creativity in texts*, *Creative concept formation*, and *Sociopolitical effects on creativity*.

The chapter by Peter Hohenhaus, entitled *How to do (even more) things with nonce words (other than naming)*, addresses the question of different functions of word-formation. The author concedes that the so-called naming function appears to be the primary motivation for lexical derivation and, as such, it is often recognised in the literature. However, what is usually overlooked is the fact that concrete acts of word-formation may serve other purposes as well. The chapter presents a number of interesting and original examples (taken from English and occasionally also from German) – of nonce word-formation, in order to demonstrate that a fairly elaborate catalogue of functions (apart from naming) can and should be postulated. The classification that follows comprises two categories: “general functions of word-formation (e.g. textual deixis, hypostatisation) and more specific metacommunicative functions” (p. 15). The latter type is illustrated, for instance, with “Identical Constituent Compounding” in English, i.e. reduplicative compounds like *friend-friend* ‘true friend’, *job-job* ‘a proper, 9-to-5 job’, etc. Hypostatisation belongs to the former functional type. The chapter offers clear and carefully worded definitions of some of the basic concepts that are invoked in the course of the discussion. A few of these concepts are not perhaps quite familiar to an average reader. Such is the case with hypostatisation – it is noteworthy, for instance, that the term does not appear in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews (2005)) or in the *Glossary of Morphology* (Bauer (2004)), even though there is a short section devoted to this notion in Bauer (1983). Fortunately, the term is explained in a few lines (p. 22), with references to works by Leonhard Lipka, who introduced it into the terminology of word-formation. Other terms which appear in this chapter, that are more commonly used in the morphological literature, are of course more accessible to the reader. However, even the standard terms are known to be, sometimes, notoriously ambiguous. For this reason, it is good that the author makes the effort to explicate the terminology. For instance, there is a useful and illuminating explanation of the conceptual contrast between the terms ‘creativity’ and ‘productivity’, as used in this contribution (see below).

The other contribution in the first part of the book is *The phonetics of ‘un’* by Jen Hay. Based on a corpus of spoken New Zealand English, the author examines the varying length of the prefix *un-* (measured in milliseconds), in tokens extracted from speech samples recorded

with 244 persons; a total of 359 such affixed words (adjectives and verbs) were identified. It is hypothesised, among other things, that there is a correlation between prefix length, and the decomposability of the *un-* words. Specifically, it is demonstrated that “more decomposable words (e.g. *unburstable*) tend to have longer prefixes than less decomposable words (e.g. *unfortunate*)” (p. 39). The feature of decomposability (occasionally referred to as “decompositionality” – cf. p. 42) is viewed as a continuum, i.e. it is argued that there are degrees of decomposability: “Affixed words seem to be ‘affixed’ to varying degrees” (p. 42). Consequences of this view are discussed, in terms of models of lexical representation and access, with special emphasis on the dual route model. But decomposability itself is shown to depend on a number of factors. The author carefully identifies a few grammatical factors, such as the effect of phonotactics (low- vs. high-probability phoneme transitions across the boundary between an affix and a base), as well as extra-grammatical factors like frequency – to be more precise, the relative frequency of a derived word and its base (p. 43). Several other grammatical factors are examined in the context of the detailed discussion and statistical analysis concerning the length of *un-*. For instance, a syntactic feature which may affect the length of the prefix is whether the word containing it is phrase final; semantically, the length of *un-* is said to depend on the informativeness of a word, and on the degree of semantic load associated with a particular instance of *un-*. Of course, the major problem is speech rate (individual variations thereof) and how to control for it. The author responds to this by declaring that “... we attempted to normalise for speech rate *to some degree* [emphasis mine – BS] by calculating the length of *un* relative to the length of the following syllable” (p. 45) which is determined in terms of syllable weight, i.e. largely reduced to a measurable grammatical (phonological) parameter. This intention is restated later on: “This calculation of the relative length of *un* goes *some way* [emphasis mine – BS] toward eliminating speech rate effects” (p. 48). The question is: does this ‘normalisation’ go far enough? Intuitively, speech rate differences (including differences in syllable length) are not only due to individual (idiolectal) variation, but may be linked to a host of other factors, some of them pragmatic in nature (e.g. emphasis, hesitation, word-finding difficulties, etc.). In other words, for a single speaker, one can imagine quite a lot of unpredictable utterance-to-utterance variation of syllable length, which may be hard to quantify and relativise. Incidentally, it appears that the terms ‘productivity’ and ‘creativity’ are used interchangeably in this contribution (probably treated as near synonyms), which stands in sharp contrast to the preceding chapter where they are viewed as denoting distinct concepts. But this is, in fact, briefly acknowledged in the conclusion: “Hohenhaus (this volume) argues that there is a cline between lexical creativity, on the one hand, and productivity on the other hand (where productivity is highly rule-governed, and lexical creativity is not)” (p. 55).

The second part of the book opens with an article by Antoinette Renouf, entitled *Tracing lexical productivity and creativity in the British Media: ‘The Chavs and the Chav-Nots’*. This is, again, a corpus-based study, reporting on a number of significant events and tendencies in the life-cycle of several, carefully analysed neologisms, extracted from the database under analysis: the text of British “broadsheet journalism in a corpus of over 700 million words” (p. 61). The approach is diachronic, in that it traces the origins and evolution of individual terms over the period from 1989 to 2005. The research reported on in this study made use of specially developed computer software which made it possible to carry out automated searches and analyses focused on a number of linguistically relevant questions: neologisms, sense relations and semantic change, collocations, etc. Further implications of this research touch upon issues in socio- and psycholinguistics as well as contemporary

politics and culture in general. However, the main emphasis is, again, on the twin concepts of creativity and productivity. Especially the latter term receives quite an unorthodox and idiosyncratic interpretation, compared to its various treatments in standard morphology textbooks and monographs. The first mention of ‘productivity’ is as follows: “By ‘lexical productivity’ [...] we mean the *inflectional spread* [emphasis added – BS] of a word or phrase, or part thereof, over a period of time, for reasons such as fashion and topicality” (p. 61). Given the widely used distinction between inflection and derivation, this statement seems to suggest that productivity is, somehow, restricted here to cover only the inflectional subcomponent of morphology. Such an assumption, were it correct, would be particularly striking in the context of the English data. However, as one reads on, it soon turns out that the reader must be prepared for a somewhat unconventional interpretation of ‘inflection’ in this paper. But it does not help much to consider the alternatively worded definition of the term given on p. 63: “Productivity is the term used to refer to the word formation processes wrought upon a lexeme. If a word is ‘productive’, it means that associated grammatical and derivational variants are being produced.” Here, it appears, conventionally defined inflection and derivation are lumped together for the purpose of determining productivity. All in all, if we additionally take into account the actual analytic practice, i.e. the data that follow and how they are described, it turns out that what one is dealing with is a fairly broad, loose and somewhat inconsistent use of the key terms like ‘inflection’ and ‘word formation’. For instance, it is fairly clear from the heading for Table 11: “Inflections of *chav* ...” and the material the table includes that, for the purpose of this study, no distinction is being made between words with a derivational suffix (*chavdom*), those with an inflectional one (*chavs*), or even instances of compounding (*chavspotter*): all these types are termed ‘inflections’. This kind of approach to ‘inflection’ and, consequently, ‘productivity’ is somewhat confusing, even though the author admits, in a footnote, that the corpus linguist may see things differently than a theoretical linguist (p. 63, fn. 8). To simplify the issue, it may well be that, on this account, ‘inflection’ is tantamount to almost any kind of formal (i.e. orthographic) difference in the representation of morphologically related words, i.e. it is any kind of morphological operation, as long as it is signalled orthographically. (Understandably, this is a convenient position for automated searches). But then – what will happen in those cases where two derivationally related words are formally identical, i.e. do not show any orthographic/phonetic difference at all? Will they also be viewed as instances of ‘inflection’? Will they be identified, in the first place? This is, of course, the problem to be faced with the productive (yes!) patterns of conversion / zero-derivation in English (*pilot_N* > *pilot_V*, etc.).

As regards ‘creativity’, its treatment seems to be more ‘normal’, along the lines suggested in the chapter by Hohenhaus (referred to on p. 70).

The table given below attempts to present schematically, to the extent that I have been able to determine the subtle sense differences, the apparent divergencies and similarities in the treatment of ‘productivity’ and ‘creativity’, in the three approaches summarised thus far (the issue recurs in some of the following papers; so, for instance, Fischer, in the final chapter, arrives at the conclusion that, at least from the viewpoint of her topic, “it seems best to disregard the distinction between linguistic productivity and creativity altogether” (p. 265)). Chronologically, the table lists the positions of Hohenhaus, Hay, and Renouf; the latter two are interpreted in terms of the first one, which seems to offer the most clearly articulated, mainstream interpretation.

Author	Productivity	Creativity	Comment
Hohenhaus	P	C	$P \neq C$
Hay	$\sim (P)$	$\sim (C)$	$P \approx C (?)$
Renouf	$\sim (P)$	C (?)	$P \neq C$

Table 1 *Three views on Productivity / Creativity*

where: P = Hohenhaus' definition of Productivity

C = Hohenhaus' definition of Creativity

The remarks on productivity and creativity in the paper by Renouf are amply illustrated with corpus data, complete with lists of neologisms, tables and graphs. The illustrations include phrases (*weapons of mass destruction*), acronyms (*NIMBY*, *NEET*), as well as other types of word-formations (*chav*, *hoodie*, etc.) or existing terms with new meaning (*tsar*).

In the next paper, Koenraad Kuiper explores the nature of Phrasal Lexical Items (PLIs) and how they can be exploited for the purpose of artistic deformation. The PLIs are lexicalised phrases like *the Bermuda triangle*, *take NP to task*, etc. Occasionally, they may have fully compositional semantics (e.g. *Have a nice day*); when non-compositional, they acquire the status of idioms. The title of this contribution is: *Cathy Wilcox meets the phrasal lexicon: Creative deformation of phrasal lexical items for humorous effect*. First, the relevant linguistic terminology, useful in the analysis of PLIs, is introduced, defined and discussed (these are terms like slot restriction, optional constituent, modifiability, flexibility, restricted collocation, unilateral idiomaticity, etc.). The accessibility condition and the recoverability condition are mentioned as prerequisites for a successful perception of the word-play effect. This means, respectively, that “a speaker must know the PLI in order to be able to perceive artistic deformation of it” and “after artistic deformation there must remain sufficient perceptual cues to allow the PLI to be accessed” (p. 95-6). Next, a typology of creative artistic deformation of PLIs follows, which subsumes different types of phonological, structural and semantic deformations. In the remainder of the chapter, these theoretical options are illustrated with concrete instances of humorous word play identified in a corpus of cartoons (captions, balloon text) by the Australian cartoonist Cathy Wilcox. The corpus “consists of 240 cartoons of which 90 contained reference to one or more PLIs” (p. 103). General remarks on the nature of artistry and artistic deformation close this chapter.

Blends in English is the topic of the chapter entitled *Blendalicious* by Adrienne Lehrer. The chapter examines an impressive collection of examples, including some well-established instances like *smog* < *smoke* + *fog*, but mainly focusing on recent neologistic formations, many of which have ephemeral status, i.e. are to be classified as nonce-words (e.g. *dogbella* < *dog* + *umbrella*). This relatively short chapter is, in fact, a mini-monograph on blends, as it seems to deal with almost every important aspect of the phenomenon. The issues and problems include the following: definition, structure and classification (with special emphasis on the role of so-called splinters, i.e. word-parts which appear in blends), phonological properties and constraints on blend formation, experimental evidence, diachronic developments, e.g. when a splinter becomes an independent morpheme (combining form) or even a free morpheme like *burger*, etc. From the point of view of a formal classification, one can learn that the major types of blends are (a) word + splinter (*wintertainment* < *winter* + *entertainment*), splinter + word (*narcoma* < *narcotic* + *coma*),

splinter + splinter (*sitcom* < *situation* + *comedy*), plus further sub-varieties. Functionally, the examples are divided into several usage-oriented domains and categories. Since blends are mostly found in the written medium (“advertisements, titles, newspaper and magazine captions and headlines, or in product and company names”, p. 132), their function, in general, is to catch the attention of the reader. Apart from the rich illustrations, the paper gives the impression that blending in English, often regarded as a marginal process of ‘word-manufacturing’, provokes several, quite serious problems of theoretical interest.

The next article is entitled *Keeping up with the times: Lexical creativity in electronic communication*, written by Paula López Rúa. The author demonstrates convincingly that “electronic communication is fertile ground for new vocabulary” (p. 137). By considering a large corpus of language data (mainly English) taken from SMS messages, e-mails and other forms of electronic communication, López Rúa identifies and illustrates the word-formation devices that are commonly exploited by users. For example, in case of affixation, a distinction is being drawn between the productive use of existing affixes (e.g. *-able* in *clickable*), the creative use of existing affixes (e.g. *-ful* in *flavourful*) as well as the rise of new affixes (e.g. *net.* in *net.party*). There is also some discussion of such major derivational techniques like compounding and conversion, but the main emphasis is on different types of shortening: written abbreviations, phonetic respellings, initialisms (acronyms as well as alphabetisms), etc. Considering the functions of those devices, the author notes that, apart from saving time and space, “Initialisation is a suitable mechanism to express playfulness, irony and political correctness” (p. 151). A special, morphologically relevant type of shortening is also evidenced by the relatively frequent use of clipping (including clipped compounds) and blending. The discussion concentrates on showing that, since there are some borderline cases, the classes of English blends and clipped compounds are not easily distinguishable. The contribution ends with a fairly long list of references, though more items could certainly be added to it (cf., for instance, Dent (2003), for further examples of abbreviations, emoticons and neologisms created by the Web users).

Judith Munat, in her article entitled *Lexical creativity as a marker of style in science fiction and children’s literature*, makes an attempt at elucidating some of the key concepts that define the theme of this volume. Again, the reader is confronted with the elusive distinction between productivity and creativity. After quoting a number of relevant sources which offer a variety of definitions, the author arrives at the conclusion that “there may, in fact, be no real qualitative or measurable distinction” between word formations of both types (p. 167). Earlier, though, it is pointed out that productivity is a question of linguistic competence while creativity is extragrammatical and hence it belongs to performance (p. 164). Another vital conceptual opposition that is illuminated is that between neologisms and nonce formations. Also, there is some discussion of the notion of motivation in word formation; this is especially valuable since the term rarely appears in British or American studies on morphological theory. The paper is rich in original language data. It examines the functions of novel formations in context, by analyzing relevant examples which appear in two literary genres: science fiction and children’s literature. Several interesting conclusions follow from this juxtaposition. Having presented a careful taxonomy of types of lexical creativity in both genres, the author points to a number of remarkable differences. For example, science fiction abounds in instances of borrowing, derivation, compounding and shortening whereas many novel formations in children’s literature are phonologically motivated; in particular, they do not involve classical combining forms. On the basis of this

sort of evidence, it is concluded that “different literary genres give rise to different types of novel formations” (p. 181).

The next part of the book, “Creative concept formation”, contains two chapters. In the first one, Tony Veale focuses on *Dynamic creation of analogically-motivated terms and categories in lexical ontologies*. Ontologies are defined as “for the most part, static organisations of categories and relations that attempt to model some aspect of the world” (p. 190). The chapter, examines, in particular, ad hoc categories which are functionally motivated (e.g. “things to take on a camping trip”). Since “the members of a given ad hoc category may be drawn from many different established categories”, which are hierarchical/taxonomic in nature, ad hoc categories “cannot easily be lexicalised with any of the labels associated with existing hierarchical categories” (p. 190). Hence, the problem of creativity is considered at two levels here: the construction of new concepts/categories as well as the creation of corresponding new lexical entries. Analogy is argued to play a vital role in tasks of both types. Its role in word creation and term creation is illustrated with examples taken from WordNet (a comprehensive electronic thesaurus of English) as well as the World Wide Web and Wikipedia. The chapter presents an outline of a formal generator meant to produce novel instances of well-formed, analogy-based compound terms.

Marginally, the role of analogy in nonce-word formation and interpretation is also addressed in the next contribution: *Creative lexical categorisation in a narrative fiction*, by M^a Dolores Porto. This is a study of lexical creativity in fantasy novels. It is demonstrated that fantasy abounds not only in new words, but also new concepts and ideas. Moreover, some of the familiar concepts may undergo processes of recategorisation. Discussion of lexical categories is couched in terms of the model of prototype categories, well known from Cognitive Linguistics. The issue is approached from two perspectives: semasiological as well as onomasiological creative categorisation. Examples taken from a fantasy novel are carefully selected and analysed in order to show, firstly, how new senses of an existing word (like *dead* meaning ‘without magic’) “enter the category constituted by all the previous senses and so become part of the meaning of the word” (p. 222). Moreover, the new sense may establish itself as the prototype of the fictional semasiological category. Secondly, according to the onomasiological approach, it is demonstrated how new lexical fields may be constructed in a work of fiction like fantasy. There are three basic options here: the construction of new categories of words (attested or neologistic), recategorisation of common words to form a new category, or reorganisation of a conventional category (e.g. in terms of concepts like prototypical vs. peripheral members). This last effect is illustrated with the reversed centrality (also: frequency) of the nouns *magician* and *magus*: in the novel under analysis, *magus* acquires the status of a category prototype (besides, it is most frequent, compared to several other members on the list) while *magician* is the most peripheral member of the category (used only once in the text). Real-life and everyday use of these two words points in the opposite direction.

The final part of the book is entitled “Sociopolitical effects on creativity”. In the opening contribution (*Occasional and systematic shifts in word-formation and idiom use in Latvian as a result of translation*), Andrejs Veisbergs examines some new tendencies in Latvian word-formation and phraseology which result from the fact that English replaced Russian in Latvia as the main contact language. The more profound social and political factors conducive to the currently observed changes, especially in the conventions of language use, are discussed as well. Thus, for instance, the formerly noted relative paucity of linguistically creative, innovative expressions in Latvian is attributed, in part, to the strong

influence of Soviet censorship on the language: “linguistic creativity, being unpredictable and novel, thus not previously approved, was naturally the first victim of censorship and consequently of self-censorship of writers, journalists and translators” (p. 243). Today, many of the lexical and syntactic vehicles of creativity, well known from English, are exploited in the Latvian language as well (e.g. compounds, blends, clippings, idiom transformations, wordplay).

The theme of censorship recurs in the last contribution to this volume – *Critical creativity: A study of ‘politically correct’ terms in style guides for different types of discourse* by Roswitha Fischer: “By examining the impact of censorship on lexis, it aims to contribute to a more general understanding of the interrelations between lexical creativity, language policy and the discursive domain” (p. 263). The notion of ‘critical creativity’ is introduced and defined as a specific variety of linguistic creativity that “serves the purpose of criticising the existing conditions and offering an alternative point of view” (p. 264). Politically correct terms are then considered as a case of critical creativity. The English examples of politically correct words and expressions are taken from several style guides, both general reference works of bias-free usage as well as, in particular, guidelines for public written discourse. Three discourse domains are examined in detail: academic writing, official documents and media language, each represented by several guidelines (e.g. *The Times Style and Usage Guide*). The guides are then compared (qualitatively and quantitatively) from the point of view of the expressions that they list and specific usage recommendations that they give, promoting politically correct language. The main focus is on the semantic changes and creative word-formation patterns that seem to emerge as a result of such recommendations. For example, the suggestion to replace marked female forms with sex-neutral equivalents (e.g. *poet* instead of *poetess*, *doctor* instead of *woman doctor*) is said to result from “unification”, which “consists in the suppression of gender specifications” (p. 275). Two other strategies are identified: specification and replacement by a euphemism (the latter type is represented, for instance, by *elderly people* as a substitute for *old people*). However, according to the author, relatively few cases of genuine lexical creativity have been found in the sample (but cf. neologisms like *chairman* > *chair*, *steward* / *stewardess* > *flight attendant*). Therefore, it is concluded that the suggestions to be found in various style guides “do not seem to be very creative” or that, more generally, “language purism and the policy of censorship have a negative effect on lexical, or even critical, creativity” (p. 280).

To conclude, due to its impressive scope of coverage and the truly creative treatment of lexical creativity, this fine collection will appeal to specialists in several linguistic disciplines and beyond. It is highly informative and thought-provoking. This is in spite of the fact that the book stops short of giving a single, definitive answer to the basic question: what is the difference between (linguistic) creativity and productivity? (Incidentally, I have noticed only a few typos in the whole collection; the more serious ones are: “hypostatison” for *hypostatisation* (p. 22), “synesynergy” for *synergy* (p. 68), “the program were based” instead of *was based* (p. 121), “the Germanic part the of English vocabulary” instead of *of the* (p. 124), plus the misspelled name of Dieter Kastovsky on page 181).

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