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"YOU JUST FREDO-KISS ME?" THE (NON-)LEXICALIZABILITY OF NONCE WORD-FORMATION

Abstract

This paper analyses 19 nonce-formations taken from sitcoms, drama series and Netflix movies that refer to elements of popular culture, i.e. movies, reality shows, music, books and fairy tales. We discuss the role of both extra-linguistic knowledge and context in interpreting their meaning, and the function of these nonce-formations in discourse. The aim of this analysis is to consider whether it is at all possible for these coinages to become lexically listed. Since these nonce-formations are created in a specialized domain (the media) and communicated to a larger speech community, we conclude that in the case of nonce word-formation there is a degree of lexicalizability.

Key words: nonce-formations, non-lexicalizability, context-dependency, discourse

1. Introduction

Nonce-formations have attracted great attention from scholars and linguists because of their deviant form and the non-existence of attested morphemes in their structure. So far most discussions have centered on whether these coinages can enter the lexicon, given the fact that they often break word-formation rules. Due to their unusual structure, they are perceived as creative and humorous coinages, which are typically stylistically marked (Hohenhaus 2005, Plag 1999). Apart from this exclusivist approach, it is also said that nonce-formations can be regular, rule-governed and even derived by productive rules (Bauer 1983, Štekauer 2002).

This paper, however, does not focus on the form and word-formation processes that are involved in the creation of nonce-formations, but rather on the fact whether it is at all possible for these coinages to become lexically listed. Even though we do not go into detail about the form and word-formation processes, we do start the analysis from the form and word-formation processes, both of which play an important role in conveying the meaning and carrying out the function of nonce-formations. Our

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hypothesis is that the meaning and the function of the nonce-formations may govern the degree of lexicalizability.

We discuss the meaning and the function of a very unique kind of nonce-formations – the ones referring to elements of popular culture, i.e. movies, reality shows, music, books and fairy tales. The corpus includes examples taken from popular sitcoms, drama series and Netflix movies, which are representative of conversational English. As Mattielo (2017: 216) notices, the mass media, especially television series may have a huge impact on young adults who "often tend to reuse words and expressions that they hear on television to seem more trendy and up-to-date". Given the fact that nonce-formations referring to elements of popular culture are communicated to a larger speech community (which increases chances that these words will be reused), their status, or, to put it more precisely, their non-lexicalizability, makes this kind of nonce-formations an interesting topic for discussion.

2. (Non-)Lexicalizability

Knowing that nonce-formations are ephemeral in nature since they are created "on the spur of the moment to cover some immediate need" (Bauer 1983: 45), it is far more typical of novel lexical creations to be used only once and never to become part of the lexicon. This characteristic of nonce-formations is called non-lexicalizability, and it is a result of context-dependence and deviation (Hohenhaus 1998). In his studies on nonce word-formation, Hohenhaus (1998, 2005, 2007, 2015) proposes his theory of non-lexicalizability which is formulated on Downing's well-known example *apple juice-seat* (Downing 1977: 822). Downing shows that the output of compounding is not necessarily a lexeme, as some compounds never gain the status of a lexeme, because they may be highy contextualized and serve the function of deixis. As in the case of deictic compounds, most nonce-formations are not based on "permanent but fortuitous semantic relationships" (Hohenhaus 2015: 273).

Nevertheless, it is possible for a word to reach the *next* stage and gain the status of neologisms and thus be treated as "young listemes" (Hohenhaus 2005: 364, author's emphasis). Neologisms are therefore relatively new words in transition which have lost the status of nonce formation, but have not become lexically listed yet; on the other hand, nonce-formations are mostly to be treated as the first and the last stage of a new possible word at the same time (Hohenhaus 2005: 365).

It is interesting to note that both nonce-formations and neologisms are often described as "new" words. In the case of nonce-formations it is also said that they are "formed afresh for a particular purpose" (Guz 2012: 224) or "formed actively (by whatever means) by a speaker – as opposed to retrieved ready-made from his/ her

storage of already existing listemes in the lexicon" (Hohenhaus 2005: 364). In this paper we will see that all the nonce-formations from the corpus have already existed as listemes or phrases in the (mental) lexicon of speakers since they are referents of popular culture. Given the fact that these words are not completely new or formed afresh, but rather created on the basis of already existing ones, their new meaning and function should govern the degree of lexicalizability. And more importantly, we should investigate whether it is at all possible for them to gain the status of neologisms and finally become lexicalized at some point.

3. Analysis

The analysis presented in this paper is based on 19 nonce-formations referring to elements of popular culture (i.e. movies, reality shows, music, books and fairy tales) which are found in the 21st century popular sitcoms and drama series, such as *2 Broke Girls, Brooklyn Nine-Nine, New Girl, Riverdale, This Is Us, The Umbrella Academy* and in Netflix movies *The Perfect Date, Always Be My Maybe, Set It Up*.[1] Our aim is to discuss the degree of their lexicalizability starting from their form, but primarily focusing on their meaning and function. All the nonce-formations are the outputs of conversion:[2]

1) (a man kissing another man) You just *Fredo-kiss* me? What's wrong with you?
2) Oh, hmm suddenly I can't think of much to confess. Pretty sure someone *Men in Blacked* me in 2008.
3) (a ghost hitting a man) You just *Patrick Swayzeed* me. How did you do that?
4) He asked her out anyway. He called her on the phone... I still remember his opening line, you know. It was so cheesy. He was like „You don't know who I am, but you're about to" (saying it in unison). – Who do you think was *Cyranoing* the entire thing?
5) We *Cyrano* them out of the office... Okay, it is when a nerdy guy helps a handsome guy date the girl he loves by telling him what to say, what to do. – That is not what we are doing. We're full-on *Parent Trapping*. – No, Charlie the point is we can't just set them up, we have to help them keep dating.
6) (a man carrying a breastfeeding device and holding a baby in his arms) I'm just *Mrs Doubtfiring* it for the time being.

[1] The list of all the season and episode series and Netflix movies from which the examples are taken, together with the list of elements of popular culture to which they refer, is given in the Appendix.
[2] Examples (4, 6, 9,10) belong to the author's personal corpus and have also been analyzed by the author in another paper (Vujić and Rabrenović 2018).

7) (after getting themselves locked on the roof) No, Jake you are not *Die-Harding off* this roof. – I'm definitely *Die-Harding off* this roof. Yipee ki-yay!... Bars!Bars!

8) And he flew out this morning to India... – So instead of getting married, he's gonna, like, just *Eat Pray Love*?

9) You can't *Kathy Bates* me forever! My work needs me. Gina needs me. – I'm sorry she's trying to kill you and I'm doing everything in my power to stop her.

10) (discussing the band breakup) And Val quit. Or should I say we were *Yoko Ono'd*?

11) You're too late, Jughead. – Well, you try *Mad Maxing* your way through a riot.

12) See... well, see I thought that a mother's group, you know you ... you talk about your babies. – Wouldn't they love that? No, this is for us ... to trade pills and get trashed and fantasize about *Gone Girling* our husbands.

13) So God bless us, everyone! It's a wonderful life! – It's time like this I really miss *Darth* Caroline.

14) Patrick Swayze's not gonna pop out of our closet is he? – It's always *Swayze* with you. No. No big grand gestures. No gifts.

15) This is the oldest tale in the book – a woman forced to trade her body to get her child shoes. It's Shakespearian, it's Dickensian, it's *Kardashian*.

16) Nobody was here when I got home, and the bed just looked so good, I went full *Goldilocks*, and you must be Regan!

17) (student and counselor discussing college applications) You're really going full-blown *Shark Tank* on me and I have to say I appreciate it.

18) (while dancing) I can't tell if you're doing *Chandler Bing* or *Napoleon Dynamite*. – *Bing* definitely.

It should not be taken as a surprise that all nonce-formations from the corpus are products of conversion since conversion is "one of the most frequent procedures for word-formation in English" (Fernández-Domínguez 2007: 73). Conversion refers to the process that results in lexical items changing their category without any overt change in their form, and for that reason it is also described in the literature as zero-derivation (zero-affixation) or functional shift (Lieber 2005: 418).[3] Examples (1–12) speak in favor of nouns being most often converted into verbs and with a possibility of creating even phrasal verbs (7). In the corpus, the new noun-to-verb nonce-formations appear

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[3] See Plag (1999,2004) for the discussion on zero-affixation and the non-exitsence of zero-morphs. See also Lieber (1992, 2004, 2005) and Don (2005) for the discussion on conversion as a process of relisting in the lexicon.

in the following verb-forms: the uninflected form of the verb for past simple tense (1), the inflected form of the verb for past simple tense (2, 3), the form of present participle (4–7), the form of an infinitive (8, 9), and past participle (10). The converted forms may go through "double conversion" noun-to-verb then verb-to-gerund as in examples (11, 12). A less productive process would be converting nouns into adjectives (13–15). A change of secondary class (16–18) is usually not treated as an instance of conversion, especially in the case of common nouns which "arise through the establishment of new meanings for what are primarily proper nouns, as with *newton*, *pascal*, *wellington*, etc." (Bauer and Huddleston 2002: 1640, authors' emphasis).[4] Nevertheless, we regard these nonce-formations as products of conversion, because their meaning and function can be discussed in the same manner as all the previous examples.

3.1 Nonce-formations and their context-dependency

As Valera (2005: 33) notices, conversion introduces a change of meaning and it may be regarded as a semantic process with syntactic consequences. In the case of all the converted examples the relationship between the base and the derivative (the output of conversion) is semantically conditioned. The outputs of conversion are semantically more complex than their bases, and also semantically more dependent on their base when it comes to the interpretation of the converted word (Plag 2004). Indeed, without being familiar with certain elements of popular culture, i.e. movies (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18), reality shows (16, 17), music (10), books (4, 6, 8, 13) and fairy tales (16), one would hardly understand the meaning of the utterances. Clark and Clark (1979) discuss innovative denominal verbs created from proper nouns that are correctly interpreted due to the speaker's and listener's mutual particular knowledge and extra-linguistic reality. Extra-linguistic knowledge comes as the first step in their interpretation, but linguistic knowledge is equally important since the innovation is more readily computable with greater specificity which is achieved by syntactic context (Clark and Clark 1979: 797). Any additional information results in better interpretation (examples 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12); yet, the "information" does not necessarily have to be supplied with words in surrounding co-text, but may also be provided with visual contextuals i.e. gestures, actions or objects as in (1, 3 and 16) or may be accompanied by both (7, 11 and 18).

The meaning of the nonce-formations referring to elements of popular culture may be described in terms of figurative extension of meaning as well. Valera (2017: 5)

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[4] The reasons why the converted common nouns are not regarded as instances of conversion are varied: the dissociation from their bases (proper nouns), their lexicalization in both synchronic and diachronic sense, their ortography etc. The nonce-formations from the corpus cannot obviously be treated in the same manner since both the speaker and the listener are aware of their nonceness.

gives a detailed account on figurative (metaphorical) extension of meaning in noun-to-verb conversion in which both the nominal base and verb may have literal and figurative meanings. If we consider example (12), we may say that the derivative *Gone Girling* has a figurative meaning (torturing somebody's husband in a way that the protagonist of the book and the movie does). However, it is far more common for verbs to denote the literal meaning as in to *Fredo-Kiss* ((for a man) to kiss another man), *Men in Black* (to erase somebody's memory), *Patrick Swayze* ((for a ghost) to hit a person), *Cyrano* (help somebody sweet talk their lover), *Parent Trap* (to matchmake), *Mrs. Doubtfire* ((for a man) to pretend to be a nanny), *Die-Hard off* (to jump off the roof with a firehose around somebody's waist in ordet to get into the building through the window), *Eat Love Pray* (to take a (love) sabbatical and go to India), *Kathy Bates* (to hold somebody in the house against their will), *Yoko Ono* (to break a music band apart (by one of the members' love interest)), *Mad Max* (to drive a motorbike in a dangerous situation). In some cases the meaning is specialized depending on the situation – *Fredo-kiss* does not mean the kiss of the death as in the movie, but rather bromanace; *Mrs. Doubtfire* also includes breastfeeding with the help of a wearable device for fathers. This speaks in favor of the context-dependent nonce-formations that are understood by all interlocutors (the speaker, the listener and the passive spectator). Other outputs of conversion (adjectives and common nouns) also denote the literal meaning: *Darth* (evil, wicked), *Swayze* (romantic), *Kardashian* (unchaste), go full *Goldilocks* (look for the most comfortable bed in the house), go full-blown *Shark Tank* (to ask pertinent and direct questions in an interview), do *Chandler Bing* or *Napoleon Dynamite* (dance in an odd manner).

Another figure of speech is more closely related to conversion as a word-formation process – metonomy which extracts one element in an event to allude to the whole event stated by the converted verb (Dirven and Verspoor 1998: 64). Apart from event-schema metonymy, in which a salient feature stands for the event itself, there is also reference metonymy, in which a salient feature becomes the identity marker for an unknown or unnamed referent (Dirven 1999: 279). Having in mind the examples taken from the corpus, the latter type of metonymy can be ascribed to nonce-formations denoting state or a characteristic of a person (adjectival formations 13, 14, 15), whereas the former type prevails over in all other examples referring to actions (1–12; 16–18). Which salient feature will be chosen depends on the speaker solely, and it is later specialized in context; for instance to *Patrick Swayze* in (3) does not imply the ability to speak to a clairvoyant or to move objects, or any other activity that Patrick Swayze as a ghost was able to do, but only to hit a person. In other words, the figurative extension of meaining that is achieved by conversion determines the scope of context-dependency of nonce-formations.

3.2 The discourse function of nonce-formations

Dirven (1999: 276) also discusses one of the most frequent discourse situations in which the real names are replaced by other referents in a metonymic process as "a sign of distancing and neutralizing emotional ties and commitment signals". When a proper name is converted, the outcome is opposite – it is usually coined with an intention to produce a strong pragmatic effect. In his discussion on converted forms in Shakespeare's works Crystal (2008: 149) emphasizes that "we should be able to feel immediately the dramatic effect of a new word function", and the same applies to the nonce-formations from our corpus. The speakers opt for nonce-formations in order to draw interlocutors' attention and to highlight certain salient features which will impact interlocutors' perception of the matter in hand. It depends on the speaker's preference whether an object, event or state to be named is an outcome of a nonce word-formation or a regular word-formation process (for example a derivative or a compound – the speaker could have said *We are full-on matchmaking* instead of *We are full-on Parent-Trapping*). It is interesting to point out that the function of nonce word-formation is not merely naming, which may lead to creating new items that could enter the lexicon (as in case of regular word formation), but may rather have many other functions (Hohenhaus 2007, 2015).

Hohenhaus (2007, 2015) classifies functions of nonce-formations (other than naming): anti-naming, hypostatisation (an act of fictitious naming), attention-seeking / foregrouding (wordplay and deliberate breaking or bending of rules), metalinguistic extraction (incorporating elements from the surrounding co-text), ad-hoc stereotypification etc. One of the most frequent ones already mentioned is a textual deictic function i.e. deictic reference modeled on Downing's deictic compounds. All of these functions are related to the immediate co-text of the nonce-formations (see Hohenhaus 2007, 2015 for examples). However, nonce-formations that are used as referents of elements of popular culture, i.e. movies, reality shows, music, books and fairy tales, are related to another discourse (a text, movie etc.). For that reason, we may say that the function of the nonce-formations taken from our corpus is that of multimodal discourse deixis.

4. Discussion

If the nonce-formations are context-dependent and, hence, always "the matter of speech (*parole*) and never that of system (*langue*)" (Štekauer 2002: 109, the author's emphasis), and if their primary function is that of multimodal discourse deixis and not that of naming which is supposed to ensure their status of neologisms next and their dictionary entries as established lexemes later on, is it at all possible for these coinages

to become lexically listed? Attested examples stand out as exceptions to the rule; one of the newest entries in the Oxford English Dictionary (March 2019) is a transitive verb *MacGyver* meaning "to construct, fix, or modify (something) in an improvised or inventive way, typically by making use of whatever items are at hand" and its derivative *MacGyvered*, an adjective meaning "adapted or improvised in an ingenious or expedient way", all of which came as a result of a rebooted US television series (*MacGyver* 2006) about a skillful secret agent from the 1980s. Other examples include *Brideshead* derived from the title of Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), *Archie Bunker* derived from the fictional character from the 1970s American television sitcom *All in the Family* and its spin-off *Archie Bunker's Place,* etc.[5]

In order to discuss the lexicalizability of this kind of nonce-formations we need to have in mind that semantically transparent nonce-formations may easily become part of the lexicon as long as they are "felt to be highly learnable, and of potential frequent usage, if only given enough exposure" (Guz 2012: 232). Nonce-formations that refer to elements of popular culture are not semantically transparent when taken out of the context, but it is their characteristic of being context-dependent that enables reducing the ambiguity of the meaning (Schmid 2008: 4), and the speech community takes this contextual meaning as its primary meaning. Furthermore, they can be regarded as highly learnable given the fact that they are not completely new words, but taken form a different discourse. In other words, their meaning and function may provide them the status of neologisms once they are item-familiar to individuals, and subsequently these nonce-formations may be institutionalized if they are "item-familiar to a large enough sub-set of the speech community" (Bauer 2001: 36). But what exactly contributes to nonce-formations gaining wider acceptance?

Cowie (2000: 182) explains that neologising is first of all a social and cultural activity, which is brought about by a certain group of speakers who share the same cultural salience. What creates a neologism and gives it the meaning and function is most frequently the discourse itself in a specialized domain. In our analysis the specialized domain is the media and interestingly enough the nonce-words are also media referents. The media as the domain represents the extra-linguistic factor that enables speakers to interpret a nonce-formation, and it is also the channel that transmits a new formation to the speech community. As Štekauer (2002: 97) points out, most nonce-formations are to be found at "the interplay between the language, on the one hand, and the extra-linguistic reality and the speech community, on the other".

The remaining question is whether all nonce-formations that refer to elements of popular culture may be lexicalized to the same extent. When the nonce-formations are first coined they are *hapax legomena* or one-offs and they cease to be nonce-formations

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[5] See the updates to the OED at: https://public.oed.com/updates/.

once they become "twice-formations" i.e. the moment when nonce-formations are reused marks "the beginning of the road along which a word has to travel before it is accepted as a neologism" (Crystal 2000: 220). In the corpus *Cyrano* appears as a twice-formation and some other examples have appeared in online dictionaries; the scene from the series *New Girl* with a reference to *The Godfather* movie (*Fredo-kiss*) had attracted a lot of attention which finally resulted in introducing this moment of bromance in the Urban Dictionary; *Yoko Ono* has its entries in both the Urban Dictionary and the Online Slang Dictionary meaning to break a musical band apart; *Patrick Swayze* means to leave or disappear like a ghost following the definition in the Urban Dictionary. Another nonce-formation that has had a great influence on the speech community is *Gone Girling*, which has been interpreted literally in a sketch comedy video about framing one's partners for the crime they did not commit, and with a slightly changed meaning of destroying your ex's life on social media in the Urban Dictionary. The indeterminacy of the meaning, as in the case of *Gone Girling*, indicates that the meaning has not stabilized yet and the word itself has not developed semantic autonomy and context-independence that would enable speakers to interpret it easily (Schmid 2008: 4). The other nonce-formations from the corpus seem to have no online dictionary entries and social media presence.

Despite the lack of speaker's expectations that nonce-formations will be carried over into other discourses (another characteristic of nonce-formations according to Crystal 2000: 219), nonce-formations may be carried over to other discourses and social media in the same manner as they were created – to highlight a certain salient feature and to refer to elements of popular culture with the aim of producing a strong pragmatic effect. In other words, the meaning and the function of these nonce-formations make them interesting enough for the members of a speech community to use them again. It is a matter of time if they will enter the lexicon; although some of them may never pass the first stage and not even become twice-formations, such as *Die Hard off* (the roof) because of their high context-dependency, some nonce-formations may easily gain the status of neologism and later on that of an established lexeme.

5. Conclusion

Being highly context-dependent and ephemeral in nature, nonce-formations are usually not expected to move on to the next stage and become neologisms, let alone lexically listed and established words. However, nonce-formations that refer to elements of popular culture i.e. movies, reality shows, music, books and fairy tales, show that there is a degree of lexicalizability which is governed by their meaning and function. The specialized meaning and function is achieved due to conversion, a very

productive process that has already given rise to establishing other referents of popular culture as lexemes. The degree of lexicalizability depends on the social factors as well, primarily the media which is at the same time the specialized domain in which the nonce-formations are created and the channel that transmits the coinages to the speech community. It takes time for a certain nonce-formation to gain enough exposure and subsequently enter the lexicon officially. Although we may never know for certain if a nonce-formation will be lexically listed one day, we cannot rule out this possibility solely based on their high context-dependency.

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Appendix

No.	Nonce-formation	Element of Pop Culture	Source
1.	Fredo-kiss	*The Godfather* (movie)	*New Girl* 01x15
2.	Men in Blacked	*Men in Black (*movie)	*2 Broke Girls* 06x04
3.	Patrick Swayzeed	*Ghost* (movie)	*The Umbrella Academy* 01x09
4.	Cyrano	*Cyrane de Bergerac* (play)	*This is Us* 02x02
5.	Cyrano, Parent Trapping	*Cyrane de Bergerac* (play), *Parent Trap* (movie)	*Set it Up* (Netflix movie)
6.	Mrs. Doubtfiring	*Mrs. Doubtfire* (movie)	*2 Broke Girls* 06x05
7.	Die-Harding off	*Die Hard* (movie)	*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* 04x18
8.	Eat Pray Love	*Eat Pray Love* (book, movie)	*Always Be My Maybe* (Netflix movie)
9.	Kathy Bates	*Misery* (movie)	*New Girl* 04x13
10.	Yoko Ono'd	*Yoko Ono* (musician)	*Riverdale* 01x06
11.	Mad Maxing	*Mad Max* (movie)	*Riverdale* 02x21
12.	Gone Girling	*Gone Girl* (book, movie)	*2 Broke Girls* 06x14
13.	Swayze	*Dirty Dancing* (movie)	*This is Us* 02x16
14.	Darth	*Star Wars* (movie)	*2 Broke Girls* 01x10
15.	Kardashian	*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (reality show)	*2 Broke Girls* 02x22
16.	Goldilocks	*Goldilocks* (fairy tale)	*New Girl* 05x10
17.	Shark Tank	*Shark Tank* (reality show)	*The Perfect Date* (Netflix movie)
18.	Chandler Bing, Napoleon Dynamite	*Friends* (series) *Napoleon Dynamite* (movie)	*The Perfect Date* (Netflix movie)