

Creative *-ness*

Martin Schäfer

Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf

DGfS, AG 1: Dynamics at the lexicon-syntax interface:
creativity and routine in word-formation and multi-word
expressions, Cologne, March 8, 2023

Creativity in word formation

Creative modification ...“as an irregular, intentional and conscious intervention of a speaker into the form and/or meaning of a pattern directed at the violation of the existing norms” (Filatkina, 2018)

- ▶ create new words
 - ▶ exploit non-default means → change the balance of patterns in the language
 - ▶ intentional and conscious

Aim

- ▶ Do consciously used new word formations fulfill this definition of creative modification?
- ▶ How?
 - investigate instances of English *-ness* derivations in scare quotes in a synchronic written corpus
- ▶ Why *-ness*?
 - ▶ productive and well-described
 - ▶ Arndt-Lappe (2014): twentieth century *-ness* neologisms from the OED, analyzed for POS, morphological makeup of base; semantic transparency → description of *-ness* regularity

-ness fact sheet

- ▶ Prototypical: turns ADJ into N
- ▶ (abstract) quality or state described by ADJ

(1) It's not **happiness** but sorrow that I'm looking for.

- ▶ nouns/phrases: “highlights or picks out the significant characteristics that make the entity what it is, denoting the abstract quality or state of those characteristics.”

Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013, p. 261)

[...]

(2) I saw them at Hammersmith Odeon in 1978 and my mate and I went to the stage door and met Geddy - he was lovely, talkative and had the long hair we wished we could have. Think he's never lost that **good-bloke-ness**.

Methods

First Step:

- ▶ All occurrences of *-ness* forms were extracted from the ukWaC corpus, a web-derived 2 billion word corpus of English (Baroni et al., 2009).
- ▶ The quoted hapaxes were further annotated for syntactic category and morphological subcategory of the base.

Second step:

- ▶ type of quote
- ▶ consider the semantics within their sentential context

Results

- ▶ 8785 *-ness* lemmata
 - ▶ 3615 hapaxes
 - ▶ 120 hapaxes in quotes.

Step 1: syntactic categories

Distribution of base POS, against the numbers from Arndt-Lappe (2014, Table 3):

syntactic category	OED 20th century neologisms (n=220)	ukWaC scare quote hapaxes (n=120)
adjective	84.5	58.3
noun	6.4	32.5
phrase	4.5	5.0
minor category	4.5	4.2

syn. category	OED 20th century neologisms (n=220)	ukWaC scare quote hapaxes (n=120)	ukWaC hapaxes unquoted (n = 3615)	
adjective		84.5	58.33	58.7
noun		6.4	32.5	34.5
phrase		4.5	5.0	2.2
minor category		4.5	4.16	4.6

Semantics

- ▶ Arndt-Lappe (2014, p. 508): semantic transparency (signal words: 'property', 'quality', 'state' or 'condition')
 - ▶ Aronoff (1976, p. 38)
 - ▶ the fact that Y is Xous
 - ▶ the extent to which Y is Xous
 - ▶ the quality or state of being Xous
- (3) "That's a privilege of **old manness**"
- (4) And I remember ski places, those overheated rooms and the books that people leave behind them and the galvanic excitement of **physicalness**.

Morphological explicitness: evade doublets/ambiguity

unquoted form

quoted form

bassness: quality of being low-pitched

bass-ness: quality of being a prototypical bass

- (5) [It's] not as aggressive as the Snarling Dogs nor as wide as the Morley but it does help retain the " **bass-ness** " of your bass and it does a good job on those " Pulling Teeth"-style solos

unquoted form

quoted form

pointedness: quality of having an end that comes to a point

pointed-ness: pointing in a specific direction

- (6) However , one diviner did not use this interpretation . He disregarded the " **pointed-ness** " of the cards , concentrating instead on whether the cards had been turned over ; this distinction is also covered

Morphological patterns in the adjectives

- ▶ Arndt-Lappe:

- ▶ -y most frequent

- ▶ -ed second most frequent morphological subcategory

ukWaC quoted/unquoted: No significant differences, dominant categories (in percent):

ending	quoted	unquoted
-ed	24.3	20.3
-y	11.4	13.2
...
“other”	18.6	19.8
all	100	100

Sanity check: *-ity*

Distribution over POS, in percent:

syntactic category	OED 20th century neologisms (n=344)	ukWaC scare quote hapaxes (n=29)	ukWaC hapaxes unquoted (n = 2590)
adjective	94.8	68.9	68.2
noun	2.0	31.0	28.9
bound form	3.2	0	0
phrase	0	0	0
minor category	0	0	2.5

Why so few quoted *-ity* derivatives?

- ▶ Higher frequency of other formations, notably compounds and blends

- (7)
- cryptoidentity, cybercreativity, dot-density, launch-on-warning-capability, wellwaterquality
 - coppertunity, ecotricity, honourtunity, horsepitality, onfinity, operatunity

Again, not likely to be special to quoted occurrences, cf. e.g. *ility*

- (8) One reason to use software libraries is that the authors have had time to add **ilities** in addition to the basic functionality.

A closer look: phrases

- ▶ What do the quoted phrase-*ness* items look like?

(9) "too-much-ness", "slovenlymindedness", "broad-mindedness",
"in-betweenness", "holier-than-thouishness",
"god-almightiness"
[all quoted phrasal -ness forms]

- ▶ And the unquoted phrases?

(10) too-coolness, too-hotness, cool-as-fuckness,
cooler-than-thouness, do-it-yourselfness, do-nothingness,
fuck-off-ness, fuck-you-ness, up-itself-ness
[selection of unquoted phrasal -ness forms]

Relative creativity

- (11)
- a. Evidently , there was the usual ” **too-much-ness** ” of German eagerness and too little knowledge of what the British are really like .
 - b. Made in collaboration with local residents and institutions , Amber City reflects on the ” **in-betweenness** ” of places whose historical and geographical location renders their reality strangely invisible .

too X-ness [unquoted ukWaC]

- (12) Do you believe in rock 'n' roll, can music save your mortal soul? Sure, but as Three One G gives it, it can also pulverize you, bear hug your guts into mush, and take your choirboy virginity with no promise of respect or love come morning. But that's all hype and fan-drooling and gushing and who needs that? Facts: Three One G operates completely removed from the flaky, style-over-substance, **too-coolness** laid down by a lot of their peers' labels.
- (13) I was outside earlier and it was so hot that someone quite literally burst into flames before my very eyes. Well sort of. All right, not at all. They did sweat a bit, though, and go quite, quite puce, so I was worried. There's nothing to do but sit on the sofa and enjoy the **too-hotness**.

fuck-X-ness

- (14) Man, there are so many ideas packed into this 8 track debut EP coming from The Bumblebees, a band whose members span continents and whose sound spans genres with such **fuck-you-ness** that the end result works like a dream. Sounding like early Beastie Boys/Beck/Missy Elliot/Timberland/The Hives/NERD and lord knows what else, White Printz is the culmination of a month long one mic/one take recording frenzy that saw each member of the 'bees collective stepping up and bringing to the mix their own individual take on the music in their heads.
- (15) And by day, grey against the grey that passes for sky in Cambridge, the cranes are like cranes. Bird-like, long-legged, flapping in the wind. [...] The cranes are so improbably close to each other that they interact like some giant sculpture. [...] So they're not there as useful engineering tools, but as art. From afar, the cranes seem gracefully flimsy, until you cycle underneath them, when their hulking **fuck-off-ness** gives them the awesome majesty of a super tanker mowing down a dinghy in a shipping lane.

Discussion 1: creative modification

Creative modification ...“as an irregular, intentional and conscious intervention of a speaker into the form and/or meaning of a pattern directed at the violation of the existing norms” (Filatkina, 2018)

- ▶ Do consciously used new word formations fulfill this definition of creative modification?

No

Discussion 2: hapaxes and OED neologisms

Same picture for both *-ness* and *-ity*: massive underrepresentation of nouns in the ADJ/N distribution





- ▶ Marchand (1969):
 - ▶ *-ity* only on adjectives
 - ▶ *-ness*: “occasionally there have been coined derivatives from substantives”
- ▶ Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013):
 - ▶ *-ity* “only infrequently on nominal bases”;
 - ▶ *-ness* “not infrequently on nouns and nominal compounds”
- ▶ Corpora from the web?
- ▶ Selection biases?

Summary and conclusion

- ▶ Looking at quoted hapaxes in the ukWaC allows one to identify conscious usage of hapaxes
 - ▶ Syntactic distribution of bases
 - ▶ differs from OED neologisms
 - ▶ similar to distribution of unquoted hapaxes in ukWaC
 - ▶ Same finding for morphological categories
 - ▶ Sanity check: same picture for *-ity*
 - ▶ Few usages explicit pointers to internal structure → avoidance of ambiguity
 - ▶ Phrases: relative creativity plays a role
-
- ▶ Conscious usage as evidenced by using quotes does not show any different to standard new word creation
 - ▶ Mismatch of ukWaC hapaxes with OED neologism distribution perhaps indicative of language change/type of corpora/selection bias

Thank you!

References I

-  Arndt-Lappe, Sabine (Nov. 2014). “Analogy in suffix rivalry: the case of English -ity and -ness”. In: *English Language and Linguistics* 18 (03), pp. 497–548. ISSN: 1469-4379. DOI: [10.1017/S136067431400015X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S136067431400015X). URL: http://journals.cambridge.org/article_S136067431400015X.
-  Aronoff, Mark (1976). *Word Formation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
-  Baroni, Marco et al. (2009). “The WaCky wide web: a collection of very large linguistically processed web-crawled corpora”. In: *Language Resources and Evaluation* 43.3, pp. 209–226. ISSN: 1574-0218. DOI: [10.1007/s10579-009-9081-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-009-9081-4).
-  Bauer, Laurie, Rochelle Lieber, and Ingo Plag (2013). *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

References II

-  Filatkina, Natalia (2018). “Expanding the Lexicon through Formulaic Patterns: The Emergence of Formulaicity in Language History and Modern Language Use”. In: *Expanding the Lexicon. Linguistic Innovation, Morphological Productivity and Ludicity*. Ed. by Sabine Arndt-Lappe et al. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 15–42.
-  Marchand, Hans (1969). *The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word-Formation. A Synchronic-Diachronic Approach*. 2nd, completely revised and enlarged. München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.