Chapter 3

A new perspective on *linguistic creativity*

In this chapter, I will attempt to show that, contrary to the received views of linguistic creativity (either as only structural generative creativity or as only lexical creativity) reviewed in the previous chapter, that linguistic creativity is, in reality, a broad-ranging, multi-dimensional and significant aspect of our linguistic competence. In this chapter the re-investigation of linguistic creativity will be done by focusing on the scope and the nature of linguistic creativity in its broadest sense. A survey of linguistic creativity will lead to a new definition of linguistic creativity, and I will show how this definition can be used in the lexical domain.

In Section 3.1, the scope of linguistic creativity will be investigated by looking at questions such as *Who is linguistically creative? Why are they linguistically creative?* and *When are they linguistically creative?* In Section 3.2 the empirical nature of linguistic creativity will be mapped out by doing a survey of linguistic creativity in the domains of lexis, grammar and discourse. A new definition of linguistic creativity, and its application in the lexical domain will be given in the conclusion to this chapter (Section 3.3).

3.1   The scope of linguistic creativity

According to De Saussure, speakers do not change the language system, even though the system may change by itself over time. De Saussure (1916a: 24) says that language (*langue*) is "outside of the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself", and later on that language "is not affected by the will of the individual" (De Saussure 1916a: 25). Speaking (*parole*) is individual, momentary, and therefore, according to De Saussure, uninteresting to linguists: Individual innovations "do not enter into our field of observation until the community of speakers has adopted them" (De Saussure 1916b: 63). According to Burke et al. (2000: 16), De Saussure's language user is "locked in a shared system of language, unable to create meanings of their own". Croce's speaker, on the other hand, is "a free spirit, unhindered by restrictive or determining grammar norms" (Burke et al. 2000: 16). Elsewhere they ask: "Is it persuasive to think of ourselves as having no control over meaning, if meaning is produced by the system rather than reflecting what we want or intend to say? Are we, in fact, trapped in the 'prison house of language' ...?" (Burke et al. 2000: 15).

To throw some light on the multi-dimensional scope of linguistic creativity, we have to make a clear distinction between at least two aspects of language that is not always explicitly made, but that may lead to conceptual confusions. The distinction that has to be made is between

- language as a *product*, i.e. a social fact and cultural *object* as it is described in dictionaries and grammars, and as it is represented in the existing texts and literature of that language (Vinokur 1923: 362), and

- language as a *process* or as an *activity*, both as external interpersonal acts of *communication* between human beings, i.e. a *communicative process*, and as one of the elements on the basis of which internal thought, or *ideation*, is possible, and which reflects *cognitive processes*, i.e. what is called the ideational functioning of language.

Burke et al. (2000: 13) make a similar distinction between language as an existing objective structure, and the agency of the speakers. Mentalists have placed language as an object in the individual's minds but are now unable to distinguish between the properties of language and the language user's abilities. Creativity is, however, a property of the speaker, and not of the language. Not only do we need to distinguish between language as product, and language as process, but we also need to specify exactly whether the theory we are envisioning is a theory of language, or a theory of speakers' abilities and actions. Deciding on a speaker's abilities and actions has direct implications for issues such as the psychological reality of these theories. This issue will be taken up again in Chapter 4.

The view that the object 'language' has been put in speaker's minds, is phrased in much stronger terms by Harris (1997) in his criticism of what he calls the telementational model of communication and the fixed-code theory of the linguistic

sign. According to the telementational model, structured and fixed meanings are transferred by speech from one person's mind to another person's mind, remaining static and fixed, and resulting in exactly the same idea being activated in the mind of both the speaker and the hearer. According to Harris (1997), the reification of grammar and meaning, which he calls the fixed-code fallacy (i.e. the erroneous assumption that linguistic elements are fixed in both meaning and form) makes the telementational view of communication possible. He claims, however, that languages are not fixed codes but are second-order social constructs which are intrinsically open-ended, incomplete and variable. Wolf and Love (1997: 3) elaborate on Harris' views as follows: languages are "not the primary objects of linguistic enquiry, but second-hand products of communities of individuals whose actual linguistic experience is what first has to be made sense of". Croce (1902: 38) states this view in even stronger terms, "language is not an arsenal of arms already made, and it is not a *vocabulary*, a collection of abstractions, or a cemetery of corpses more or less well embalmed". Zlatev (1999) also makes it clear that creativity is the result of processes in the mind of the speaker, rather than facts about the world or about language. The various views expressed above therefore suggest a significant shift away from the language-inherent locus of linguistic creativity to the speaker's abilities and performances.

In the survey of the literature on linguistic creativity in Chapter 2, it was mentioned that a large proportion of the titles on linguistic creativity are in the domains of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and translation studies. On the one hand, it is

clear from this survey that children, second-language learners and language practitioners (like translators, terminologists, interpreters and other users of specialised language) actively experiment with language in speech play and in the process of either learning a language, or carrying out their professional linguistic duties (cf. Gerrig and Gibbs 1988, Kecskés 2000, Kussmaul 2000, Kenny 2001). The range of topics and domains that are reported on here indicate that linguistic creativity is indeed active and attested in all human linguistic activity. On the other hand, it is generally accepted that writers and orators, i.e. the makers of verbal art or poetic language, are creative. This is in accordance with the general philosophical view that *all* human beings are creative in Section 2.1, and that creativity in general, and linguistic creativity in particular, is an essential trait of their humanness; as expressed by Gupta (1992: 14) "every individual is creative in one way or the other unless some pathology is visualized with him or her".

There may, however, be a folkloristic notion that normal, adult first-language speakers are not linguistically creative which may have arisen from the contrast between literature (which is by definition 'creative') and everyday discourse (which may, in contrast, automatically be seen as being not creative). The question of whether everyday discourse can be viewed as the products of linguistic creativity has been addressed by several authors: Gerrig and Gibbs (1988: 3) argue that "the ability to expand the range of meanings ... is in no way restricted to gifted orators or writers", while Pateman (1997: 227) claims that "we are all poets". Croce (1902: 33) also claims that the science of language and the science of art are not two

distinct things, and that whoever studies language has to study aesthetic problems. According to Croce (1902: 35) both the simplest exclamation (i.e. everyday discourse) and the greatest poem (i.e. literature) are the manifestations of the creativity of "expressive organisms" (i.e. creative human beings) (Croce 1902: 38). Jakobson (1960: 335) claims that to keep poetics and linguistics apart is to illicitly restrict linguistics: "language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions" (Jakobson 1960: 335). Together with the other functions of verbal messages (i.e. the emotive, referential, phatic, metalingual and connotative function), the poetic function of *any* verbal message is important. AAny attempt to reduce the sphere of poetic function to poetry ... would be a delusive oversimplification@ (Jakobson 1960: 337). In line then with the general philosophical view that all human beings are creative, these authors support the idea that everyday discourse can also be regarded as linguistically creative.

In this section, we have seen that in order to discuss linguistic creativity we have to distinguish between the products of linguistic creativity and the cognitive / mental processes that reflect the abilities of speakers to be linguistically creative. In Section 3.2 a survey of the products and processes of creativity in language will be given. However, if linguistic creativity is seen as processes in the mind of the individual language user, we need to investigate both the motivation of language users to be linguistically creative, as well as the temporal aspects related to linguistic creativity.

3.1.1 Motivations for and functions of linguistic creativity

If linguistic creativity is an essential trait of human beings, there may not appear to be any need to explore the motivation and function of linguistic creativity as such. However, linguistic creativity is manifested in individual instances by individual speakers, and each one of these instances and speakers may be motivated by a variety of reasons, at that particular point in time, to be linguistically creative. Gerrig and Gibbs (1988) describe two types of motivations for speakers to turn to creative language use. The first motivating factor the speaker's need is to "express ideas that are unavailable in the standardized repertory of meanings" (Gerrig and Gibbs 1988: 3). The second type of motivating factors are social factors, which include both pragmatic and more general social factors. These two factors will be elaborated more in the following sections. It is important to bear in mind that these motivations and reasons for linguistic creativity are motivations of the language user, i.e. the prompt for linguistic creativity is always within an individual language user.

Conceptual inexpressibility as a motivation for linguistic creativity

Spitzer (1956: 70) refers to the "desire for renewed expression" and refers to the *Sprachschöpfer* ('language creators') which are individual speakers that are in a specific situation (such as the unusual one Spitzer investigates, namely a war) that requires new concepts and expressions. For example, the verb *to hamster* meaning 'to hoard food, sugar and cigarettes due to the shortages in war times' became a commonly used word in World War II, which is, however, not commonly

used (in that particular sense) today. This is an example of a semantic shift using metaphor, as well as a grammatical change in word class from noun to verb. According to Spitzer (1956: 56) "dissatisfaction" with the existing language and its waning expressivity leads to new coinage. He claims that while the language system maintains stability and conservatism, it also "curtail[s] or hamstring[s] or suppress[es] our expressive faculties" (Spitzer 1956: 68). Even though Spitzer's war example may be unusual or extraordinary, the main point is that human circumstances and the environments in which human beings find themselves are continuously changing, which results in the need of human beings to express themselves in new and changing ways. Birnbaum (1990: 176) sees linguistic creativity as "necessitated by, and directly reflect[ing], the creativity of human thought", as it is reflected in the development of science and technology. Neologisms in scientific and technological language (which typically rely on word formation and word creation strategies) are common and are a result of the conceptualisation and subsequent communication of special knowledge which necessarily follows scientific and technological development and discoveries. Gupta (1992: 15) also sees both the "expression of an inner state" (such as reflection, meditation, emotions and thought) as a motivation for creativity, as well as the need to meet an externally defined need, goal or problem (as in the case of inventors and scientists). Ward et al. (1997: 2-3) claim that human beings are continually creating new cognitive entities that serve purposes of understanding, organising, classifying and communicating new ideas. According to them, the never-ending development of categorial and conceptual knowledge due to our

changing environment, and our changing perspectives and understanding of it, is in itself a creative phenomenon.

The need to express some idea or concept that the existing language does not take into account, both internally in terms of ideation (previously defined as some form of 'inner speech' or thought processes), as well as externally for use in communication, is therefore a motivation for continuous linguistic creativity and linguistic change. This motivation shows, in effect, that a static view of language and linguistic knowledge is not possible, since human beings continuously and creatively, and possibly innately, respond to their external and internal environment (cf. Mithen 1998).

Pragmatic motivations for linguistic creativity

Communicative effect and intent can also be a motivation for a speaker to be creative. The following is a brief summary given by Gerrig and Gibbs (1988) to illustrate the point that linguistic creativity may be partially motivated by pragmatic reasons:

- We can inform others about our beliefs in an indirect way. For example, by referring to marijuana as either *weed*, *grass, pot* or *drugs* shows whether the speaker believes it to be harmful or not.
- Speakers can be striking and memorable, especially in persuasive discourse. For example, lexical innovations such as *devilicious* (the

blending of *devil* and *delicious*) can be used in advertising language to create certain effects.

- Social pressure to be polite or to handle sensitive issues can be a reason for linguistic creativity. For example, in war soldiers often use other terms for death, such as *offed*, which is a metaphorical transfer from being present and alive to be being *off*, i.e. away and therefore dead.

The varying communicative intentions and needs of speakers, as reflected in indirect speech acts of varying types (e.g. informing or indirectly requesting) and for various reasons (e.g. to be striking or polite), may therefore be a motivation for linguistic creativity.

Social motivations for linguistic creativity

Gerrig and Gibbs (1988: 7) "argue that many innovations arise because speakers engage in different kinds of language games, each fulfilling its communicative purpose". This kind of linguistic creativity (such as playful interchanges, puns, jokes, etc.) may be used to re-enforce intimacy between group members, for example, by means of non-serious and non-informative verbal interaction, as well as to exclude non-group members. In some cases, this exclusion is not only intended as a social statement, but is deliberately intended as an exclusion from the *meaning* of what is said for practical purposes. For example, the so-called *boeptaal* (language of prison inmates in South African prisons) is specifically created to exclude the wardens from the communications going on between

inmates (Barnes 2001). The so-called *roekertale* as subculture languages in adolescent and young adult males speaking Cape Afrikaans, as well as the languages of the homosexual community confirm linguistic creativity as a marker of group identity. Linguistic creativity is also typically used by minority groups (such as Asian-Americans, American-Indians and African-Americans) to show their unity in the multilingual communities by, on the one hand, using some form of the common dominant language (in this case American English) but, on the other hand, separating themselves from the mainstream by the use of innovations and slang.

Speech play, apart from playing a major role in language learning, may also play a role in enhancing a speaker's status. For example, word play and puns are a typical feature of British humour which typically exploits ambiguity in language. The use of ritual insults in specific subcultures will also enhance the speaker's status. For example, it is currently considered *mega-cool* (a novel compound) amongst Pretoria-East primary school children to be good at *dissing*, which involves directing insults but which may, however, not include swearing and taboo words at your friends, but which are nevertheless *dis*-*gusting* (*to dis* is based on a backformation which then gets full status as a word and can be inflected in *dissing* and *disses*). Examples of *disses* are: *you're so fat every time a bus runs you over, you turn around and say "stop throwing stones"; you're so thin you have to run around in the shower to get wet; you're so stupid that you'll starve in a supermarket; you're so poor you live in a triple-story match box; you're so ugly*

when you walk past a rubbish bin it sings 'we are family, even though you're uglier than me'; your brain has just been upgraded to a peanut.

The motivations for linguistic creativity can, therefore be summarised as follows:

- conceptual motivations, i.e. expressing a concept or idea that has not been expressed as yet
- pragmatic motivations, i.e. expressing various types of indirect speech acts for reasons such as politeness or avoiding sensitive issues
- social motivations, such as expressing group solidarity or enhancing one's social status.

Even though these reasons which prompt speakers to be linguistically creative may in some cases seem unusual, it is interesting to note that the linguistic mechanisms to achieve the intended social consequences are the same as are used in all the other cases with different motivations. These mechanisms of linguistic creativity, such as compounding, blending, backformation, metaphor, etc. will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.2 in the survey of linguistic creativity.

3.1.2 The time frames and context of linguistic creativity

In the generative view of creativity, linguistic creativity is seen as a essential trait of individual language users, and the source or mechanism to account for it is proposed as an individual mental operation that presumably happens online during the generation of sentences. In contrast, the traditional lexical view of creativity

originated mainly within the diachronic perspective, particularly before the advent of Cognitive Semantics. It is therefore necessary to explore the temporal aspects involved in linguistic creativity.

Linguistic creativity can take place in various distinct time frames

- the *personal time frame* in which a specific speaker is producing, or a hearer is interpreting, creative language as speech progresses
- the *social time frame* in which speakers are creative, often as a result of the specific social, economic or other circumstances, change and upheaval
- the *historical time frame* in which languages change as a result of the linguistic creativity of it's speakers
- the *palaeoanthropological time frame* in which language evolved.

The first perspective of the temporal aspect involved in linguistic creativity is the view in which a specific linguistic expression uttered by a specific speaker at a given point in time, is seen as a creative linguistic act. This involves *the online production of linguistic expressions as communicative acts by individual speakers*, which subsumes

- the existing linguistic knowledge of speakers (i.e. the basis of linguistic creativity)
- the cognitive processing involved in their perceptions and responses to given external and internal circumstances (i.e. the prompts for linguistic creativity)

- the online creation of new forms and meanings by speakers (i.e. the creative cognitive processes involved), and

- the linguistic choices made by speakers (this includes the possibility of speakers making the choice of taking a linguistic action, such as speaking, rather than another kind of action (such as hitting or hugging the person).

The notion that the primary temporal perspective on linguistic creativity should be that of the individual, personal and online creation of linguistic expressions and communicative acts, is supported by the following authors: As Aitchison (1987: 11) says, human beings "often create new words and new meanings for words from moment to moment while speech is in progress". Spitzer (1956) also links with Croce's (1902) notion of expressivity (i.e. expressing creative thoughts and ideas) and accords primacy to the individual utterances of individual speakers. De Beaugrande (1986: 788-789) states that real natural-language creativity is in the delicate balance and interaction between lexicogrammatical constraints *during real discourse*. As De Saussure (1960: 168) puts it "Nothing enters language without having been tested in speaking."

Another interesting issue that is related to the immediate and current personal time frames of individual speakers, is whether linguistic creativity does display patterns of waxing and waning in the life span of individual speakers. In other words, are young children or teenagers more creative than middle-aged or older adults? Or, for a specific person, can that person be more creative in their twenties than in

their thirties, or in their fifties than in their sixties? This question is also related to the issue that was addressed earlier of whether children acquiring a language are 'more' creative (e.g. during the imaginative stage) than adolescents (during the consolidating stage), or than normal, adult speakers of a language. This would, of course involve either longitudinal studies of individuals, or experimental studies with large groups of respondents in various age groups, neither of which fall in the scope of this thesis.

Another perspective on the temporal dimension of linguistic creativity is related to the social motivations for linguistic creativity. One of the reasons for linguistic creativity that was discussed in Section 3.1.1, was *the need for expressivity, specifically in certain situations and at specific times* (such as war time, or time served in prison). The answers to such types of *when* questions in relation to linguistic creativity may be pursued in different ways. For example, sociolinguistic studies may show ways in which general social (including political and economic) upheaval, changes and transformation, may be reflected in linguistic creativity. Williams's (1976) study in *Keywords* is, for example, an attempt from a lexicological perspective to show how common words such as *culture*, *democracy* and *materialism* have creatively changed their meanings in 20th century English. Such sociolinguistic studies in linguistic creativity in South Africa in the time of *transformation* (which in itself is an example of a meaning shift due to a specific need at a specific time), would be of particular interest. For example, in current South African English, and spoken in jest, the word *nationalised* (in sentences such

as *My car has been nationalised*) means 'stolen'. In an even larger palaeoanthropological time frame, the need for communication and expressivity, perhaps also in times of natural or social upheaval, may also be seen as reflected in linguistic creativity in another dimension, namely in the creation of language as a human phenomenon in itself. Recent empirical studies by Lehrer (1996) and Van Niekerk and Jenkinson (2004) seem to suggest that neologisms are becoming a more frequent phenomenon. For example, Lehrer (1996: 360) claims that "creative neologisms have become so common in recent years that hardly a day goes by without encountering new items".

Looking at the historical aspect of the temporal dimension of linguistic creativity, Spitzer (1956) sees linguistic change as the result of individuals who are motivated to initiate and introduce change. According to De Saussure (1916b: 63), "in the history of any innovation there are always two distinct moments: 1) when it sprang up in individual usage; and 2) when it becomes a fact of language, outwardly identical but adopted by the community." De Saussure himself therefore makes a distinction between the creative speech act of the individual speaker, and the time when the speech community may (or may not) accept the novelty as part of the known linguistic repertoire. According to Spitzer (1956: 67), Hans Sperber in his *Bedeutungslehre* also distinguishes two stages in the history of a neologism: the initial 'creative moment' in which a coinage is devised by a speaker, and the next stage in which certain 'fixing factors' make the community accept the coinage. According to Spitzer (1956: 68)

> Linguistic creation, just as creation in other fields, is intended as a lasting contribution to mankind and in cases in which the creation has not met with success we have to do with 'creation' aborted, not at the moment of creation, but by ulterior historical development.

Every individual creative act of every speaker therefore, has the *potential* to change the language, in the sense of add-ons, growth and development (e.g. in the vocabulary), as well as in the modification of the system (e.g. in the loss of paradigmatic distinctions such as in the loss of the full case system in English).

In this thesis, I will exclusively focus on the creative aspect in the language use of individual speakers, i.e. on the necessary first moment of the creative act.

3.2   A survey of linguistic creativity

In this section, I will briefly explore the question of *what* may count as linguistic creativity, i.e. the possible linguistic products and processes involved in creativity. In order to facilitate the description of what can be regarded as linguistic creativity, I will follow the distinctions that were made in Section 3.1 between 'language as an object' (i.e. the products of linguistic creativity) which is a reflection of the linguistic creativity of speakers, and 'language as a communicative process' and 'language as a cognitive process' (i.e. the processes in linguistic creativity). This is not meant to say that these aspects of linguistic creativity exclude one another, it is merely a point of departure for a taxonomy of linguistic creativity. It is important to note that the followings sections are intended as a broad empirical sweep of the products in

language which may count as instances of linguistic creativity. At this stage, no theoretical discussion will take place as to how these instances of linguistic creativity were produced or interpreted by language users. It is, however, the overall aim of this study to look at how hearer's and speaker's do, in fact, produce and interpret these instances of linguistic creativity.

3.2.1 Lexis

Formal lexical creativity:

Cruse (1986: 50) points out that, "lexical creativity is probably of a similar order [as syntactic creativity] ...". Apart from the more regular, productive word-formation processes of derivation, compounding and reduplication (cf. Table 3.1), that have been included in the generative lexicon as productive word-formation rules, there are several other mechanisms that are used to create new words. I will refer to these mechanisms as word-creation strategies to distinguish them from the more regular word-formation rules illustrated in Table 3.1.

	English	**Afrikaans**
Derivation	*yuppification* (the making of a Young Urban Professional Person)	*ge-cutex* (to put nailpolish / cutex on)
Compounding	*policeman's coffee* (brandy and coke)	*bekgevegte* ('mouth fights'; verbal arguments)
Reduplication	Not productive in English	*drink-drink* (to be drinking continuously)

Table 3.1 *Productive word-formation processes* (most examples taken from Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004)

Word-creation strategies do not necessarily involve the morphological structure of words and are often not considered as part of morphology (i.e. part of the linguistic knowledge of speakers that has to be accounted for by a linguistic theory). In Bauer's words (1988: 39):

> It is also extremely doubtful whether such words can be analysed into morphs, and thus whether they form a real part of morphology.

Word-creation strategies, such as clipping, backformation, blending, inventions and borrowing (cf. Table 3.2) (Aitchison 1987: 143-162, Bauer 1988:26-40 and Hudson 2000: 241-246) are discussed and illustrated in every introductory linguistics textbook that focuses on words, even though they are not regarded as regular, productive word-formation processes. Two reasons that may account for the view that these types of word-creation strategies are not considered part of the linguistic knowledge of speakers, are that

X   word-creation strategies (as opposed to word-formation rules) do not typically make use of the known and existing morpheme stock of the language, even though they usually still obey the language-specific constraints on word forms such as constraints on permissible phonological strings

X   word-creation strategies are typically attributed to the creativity of individual speakers, are regarded as once-off inventions, and are not attributed to the productivity within the linguistic system itself (Bauer 1988: 65).

	English	Afrikaans
Clipping	*alci* (alcoholic)	
Backformation	*e-mail* (electronic mail)	
Blending	*Eurocrat* (European bureaucrat)	
Invention	*sereni-tea* (calming tea)	
Borrowing		*kool* (from English *cool* meaning 'acceptable and fashionable')

Table 3.2 *Word-creation strategies* (all examples taken from Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004) (empty slots indicate that no such examples were given by Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004)

The difference between word-formation rules and word-creations strategies are, in part, a reflection of the difference between productivity and creativity which will be discussed in detail here since it links up in a significant manner with the generative view of linguistic creativity discussed in Chapter 2.

Productivity vs creativity:

Bauer (1988: 57) defines productivity in the following way: "Any process is said to be productive to the extent that it can be used in the production of new forms in the language." This definition clearly relates productivity to *new* forms, and therefore also to creativity. However, both Lyons (1977: 549) and Bauer (1983: 63-64) make a distinction between productivity and creativity (cf. also Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004):

> Productivity is one of the defining features of human language, and is that property of language which allows a native speaker to produce an infinitely large number of sentences, many (or most) of which have never been heard before. It is assumed that productivity is to be accounted for by the rules of a generative grammar. Creativity, on the other hand, is the native speaker's ability to extend the language system in a motivated, but unpredictable (non-rule-governed) way. ...

> Both productivity and creativity give rise to large numbers of neologisms, ... [O]nly rule-governed innovation, that is productivity, [is discussed by Bauer in his book]. This is because it is impossible to make any worthwhile generalizations about creativity because of its unpredictability, although it would no doubt be possible to provide a taxonomy of types of creativity. Bauer (1983: 63-64)

However, in his conclusion Bauer (1983: 294) concedes that processes such as clipping and blending, for example, may require

> ... generalizations to be captured [that] may not be possible to formulate in generative terms. In all these cases it was suggested that the examples under consideration were exceptions to the general principle of regularity in word-formation - that they were possibly creative rather than productive, and so on. However, it might seem that rather too much is being swept under the carpet in this way, and it must be asked whether the processes of word-formation are in fact rule-governed, or whether they are in principle irregular. Bauer (1983: 294)

So rather than including word-creation strategies in an account of possible regular creative processes, Bauer ends up by excluding even the regular productive word-formation processes. Both Lyons and Bauer do, however, view productivity as "rule-governed" which means that they include the recursive syntactic rules (originally proposed by Chomsky to account for creativity) as part of productivity. Creativity on the other hand, in their view, is not governed by rules. This means that productivity and creativity are seen as independent and possibly mutually exclusive concepts, the former reflecting rule-governed behaviour, and the latter unpredictable innovation. By making this distinction, Lyons and Bauer at least remove the inherent contradiction (pointed out in Chapter 2) in Chomsky's concept of "rule-governed creativity". To repeat briefly, how can a sensible view of genuine creativity reduce a rich and inherently open-ended concept to be based on a fixed inventory and governed by a fixed set of rules?

There is, however, another way of looking at the contrast between productivity and creativity, and Bauer (1988: 62) gives some indication of this when he refers to productivity as "some measurement of generalization" and "productivity as a cline" (Bauer 1988: 57).This view of productivity as a quantifiable measure, or as a rate or scale, is supported by Gupta (1992: 11), when he says that creativity is different from productivity since productivity is a *rate* of work. In this view, linguistic productivity can be seen as the rate or measure of the use of linguistic processes (whether they are rule-governed or unpredictable) to create new expressions, with the predictable rule-governed processes at the very productive end of the scale, and the unpredictable innovations at the unproductive end of the scale (cf. Figure 3.1). The productivity of linguistic processes can then be regarded as a quantifiable rate of some processes falling under the more general qualitative notion of linguistic creativity.

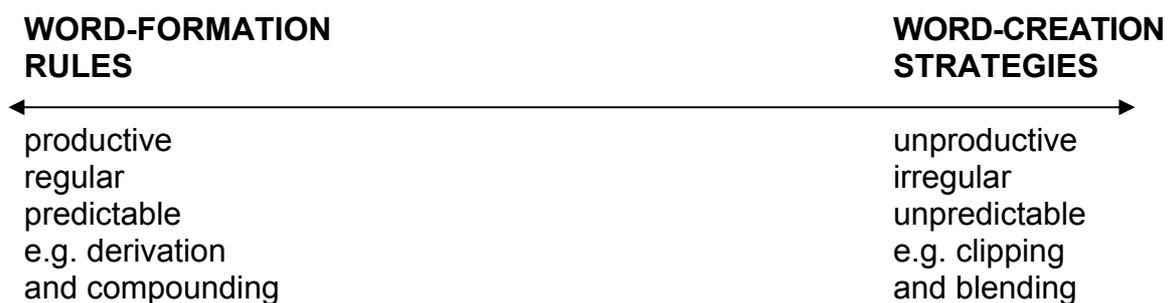| **WORD-FORMATION RULES**	**WORD-CREATION STRATEGIES**
←————————————————————————————→	
productive	unproductive
regular	irregular
predictable	unpredictable
e.g. derivation	e.g. clipping
and compounding	and blending

Figure 3.1 *More productive word-formation rules vs less productive word-creation strategies*

As far as the creative word-formation processes in the lexicon are concerned, Bauer (1988: 65) makes a distinction between individual and societal productivity. Societal productivity is defined as the situation in which a particular morphological process is productive in the speech of a large enough number of members of that speech community, and will give rise to lexicalisations which will typically be listed in dictionaries, i.e. the word that is formed on the basis of the word-formation processes becomes lexicalised, and is considered a part of the language as a social construct. For example, the word *voter* is a typical example of V + *-er* derivation. Individual productivity will give rise to so-called *hapax legomena* (novel words with only a single occurrence) and will "even more frequently never come within the scrutiny of the professional linguist or grammarian" (Bauer 1988: 65). Bauer claims here that once-off and fleeting lexical innovations are not relevant to linguists and grammarians, but it should be made clear that Bauer assumes that linguists and grammarians should only be interested in 'language as a societal object' which needs to be studied and described in reference grammars and dictionaries. However, linguists interested in the speaker's abilities to create novel expressions should most definitely be interested in hapax legomena. One of the problems in studying hapax legomena is that they are fleeting and therefore lost for research, but with the advent of corpus linguistics there is a greater possibility of capturing at least some of these instances of novel expressions. I have already discussed the differences between productivity and creativity, but Bauer's observations of the differences between individual and societal productivity are as relevant for linguistic creativity as for morphological productivity, since it draws our

attention to the relationship between individual morphological productivity or creativity which may have a lasting result in the language in the form of an entrenched usage. This thesis will, however, in essence, take the opposite view of Bauer, namely that it is individual productivity and creativity that is the object of study of the (cognitive) linguist (i.e. the linguist interested in the creative abilities of language users), although I do agree that societal productivity falls within the scope of grammarians and lexicographers, which in essence have a specific language 'as an object' as a domain of study.

It would, however, be interesting to establish the proportions of words in any given language created by each of these mechanisms (including the word-formation rules), since the proportions of these words in the language will show how productive the mechanisms are. The following contribution to the FUNKNET list (dated 26 April 2000 by Mikael Parvall) is an illustration of this point merely with regard to borrowing as a word-creation strategy:

> ... as Dick Hudson pointed out, English, [has] 60% or so of borrowed material. Until recently, I thought that was pretty exceptional, but I have now realised that it is more common than I originally thought. For instance, figures of borrowed vocabulary that have been suggested for some other languages include:
>
> Korean - at least more than half
> Swedish - 65-70%
> Vietnamese - 60-70%
> Breton - 60-80% (including 40% core vocabulary)
> Lolak (Austronesian) - 80%
> Vlax Romani - 90% (note that this is not a so-called Para-Romani variety!)
> Hungarian - 90%
> Albanian - 90%

Such research is made possible by new developments in computational corpus linguistics, and could go a long way to establish the correctness of the claim that lexical items created by word-creation strategies do not make up a large proportion of the vocabulary of any language. For example, half of the 100 million tokens of the British National Corpus are hapax legomena, and 57,56% of the types in the GEPCOLT corpus occur only once (Kenny 2001), which seems to indicate that lexical innovation is much more frequent than is generally assumed. As was mentioned before, language corpora capture these once-off fleeting innovations by speakers which would previously have been lost as objects of study. The availability of these corpus studies show that word-creation strategies, which were previously thought to be very unproductive are, in fact, much more productive than was previously believed (cf. also Lehrer's comment on the pervasiveness of blending in Lehrer (1996)). The extent to which these word-creation strategies are productive needs to be thoroughly investigated in order to establish their true contribution to lexical innovation.

In borrowing, as a word-creation strategy, there is sometimes a change in the meaning of a lexical item when it is used in another language (Hudson 2000: 246-249). For example, *gung-ho* was initially used during World War II in the USA to describe the ideal military fighting spirit. This word was borrowed from Chinese where it simply meant 'work together'. The Reader's Digest Word Power Dictionary (2001: 432) now defines *gung-ho* as "unthinkingly enthusiastic and eager".

Changing the meaning of an existing lexical item, is another form of lexical creativity which we will look at in the next section.

Semantic lexical creativity:

In formal lexical innovations (such as derivations, compounds, blends, etc.) the changes to an existing word are obvious and there is therefore an overt linguistic signal that the word has undergone some change and is therefore likely to carry a new meaning. This new meaning is in some cases predictable and regularly derived from the form of the word, for example, in the case of endocentric compounds where the compound denotes a sub-class of the head of the compound (Bauer 1988: 35). For example, a *dinner jacket* is a kind of *jacket* and a *kitchen table* is a kind of *table*. In many cases of compounding and derivation, however, the meaning of the newly formed word is not necessarily derivable from the meanings of the constituting elements in a compositional way. For example, a compound such as *policeman's coffee* does not refer a kind of *coffee*, but to an alcoholic drink typically drank by policeman in South Africa, and a derivation such as *cooker* in British English refers to a stove, and not a person who cooks, as the norm would be in a typical V + *-er* derivation. It is clear then that, in accordance with basic principles of iconicity (Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 254), a new lexical form generally implies a new meaning.

Aitchison (1987: 143) points out that "... humans use [existing] words in creative and innovative ways, and this is an intrinsic part of a human's lexical ability." Or, as Sampson (1980: 56) puts it: "There is no escaping the creativity of semantic behaviour." The types of cases, where an existing word form is used with a new meaning, will be referred to here as cases of purely semantic lexical creativity and will be discussed in the next paragraph. In pure semantic lexical creativity, there is no change in the form of the word that signals that the meaning has changed.

Clear cases of pure semantic lexical creativity are sometimes referred to as semantic shift (i.e. both narrowing and extension) (Sampson 1980: 56-59, Hudson 2000: 259-260). An example of narrowing is where the word *band*, meaning 'a group of people', has come to mean 'a group of people making music together'. An example of extension is where the word *silverware* has come to refer to all kinds of cutlery, even if they are not made out of silver. Semantic shift is a phenomenon that has been extensively studied in etymology, where the meanings of words have changed over time. Semantic shift can also be the result of various mechanisms such as metaphor (e.g. *to hamster* meaning to hoard food in times of hardship) and metonymy (*reds* referring to communists due to their contiguity with the red communist flag), and usually give rise to the lexical relation of polysemy (where a lexeme has more than one sense) (Taylor 1991: 98).

Paradigmatic lexical choice:

Some proposals in traditional lexical semantics assume that the lexicon is organised in various ways, for example, in terms of semantic fields, hierarchical taxonomies, or sense relations (such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, etc.) (Lyons 1968, Lehrer 1974, De Stadler 1989). The following question now arises: On what basis would a speaker choose one specific lexical item for insertion in a syntactic structure, rather than another closely related, synonymous or near-synonymous item, or a superordinate instead of a more specific term? For example, on what basis would a speaker make a choice between words such as *book* and *novel* in the following sentence, obviously given that the speaker is reading a book, and that the book is, in fact, a novel:

> *I am reading a fantastic **book** at the moment!*

> *I am reading a fantastic **novel** at the moment!*

Or, as Jakobson (1960: 339) asks, what makes a speaker select between *child, kid* or *tot*, and then makes him or her select *sleeps, dozes, nods* or *naps* to be combined with it? In lexical semantics, these choices by a speaker give rise to the phenomenon of vagueness, also sometimes called the modulation of senses (Cruse 1986: 50-53). These simple examples of the speaker's choice in terms of possible lexical items which are equivalent in some sense and can replace each other in an expression, reflect the paradigmatic lexical aspect of creativity; the speaker is creating one expression rather than another, possible expression, e.g. *The child sleeps* vs *The child dozes* vs *The child naps*. Choosing to produce an

utterance (as opposed to being silent), and choosing to produce utterance X and not utterance Y, is a form of linguistic creativity. Whether it is the choice of lexical item that makes an utterance (any utterance) creative, or the mere fact that an utterance has been produced that is creative (or both), may be debatable. My argument would, however, be that lexical choice, as well as choosing to produce an utterance in the first place, should be included in this taxonomy to paint the broadest possible picture of linguistic creativity which can then be refined by counterarguments in later studies.

Another example that illustrates lexical choice as an aspect of linguistic creativity is illustrated in the following extract from a discussion on the FUNKNET electronic mailing list (dated 18 December 1999; contribution by Wally Chafe). The extract is in response to a discussion of the contribution that Chomsky has made to modern linguistics, in this case, in terms of his views on creativity:

> It would be easy to question some of the positive contributions listed by Brian, but I'll mention just the notion of "creativity", which has always puzzled me. The ability of language users to produce and understand novel sentences (or whatever) doesn't come from recursion, **but from the insertion of a vast lexicon into a relatively small set of patterns**. Yesterday my wife said to me "Don't mist the ribbon." It had to do with squirting water on a Christmas wreath. I doubt that she had ever said that before, and I certainly had never heard it before, but there was no problem (and no recursion). [my emphasis – BEZ]

If one regards the mental lexicon as a fixed set of known and existing words (such as $mist_N$) then regarding this example as an example of creative choice may seem controversial, since $mist_V$ is a lexical innovation which would not be listed in the

lexicon and can therefore not be chosen as such. However, the speaker **chose** to **create** a lexical innovation *mist$_V$* instead of choosing a conventional expression such as *Don't squirt the ribbon with water*. This example is particularly interesting because it involves the use of a noun *mist* as a verb in a novel way, i.e. it is an example of intercategorial polysemy which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. This type of choice made by a speaker involves the notion of 'construal', in this case construing a given situation as either an action (which is expressed by a verb), or as the result of action (expressed as a noun).

Syntagmatic lexical choice*:*

In the previous section, I have discussed the choices that speakers are able to make between two similar lexical items (in a paradigmatic sense). In this section, I will focus on the choices that speakers can make in choosing which lexical items will go together in an expression in a syntagmatic sense. These types of choices result in lexical co-occurrence patterns called collocations. In lexical semantics, collocations are words that typically occur together in particular sections of discourse or text and reflect a relationship which has been called 'semantic prosody'. For example, in a discussion of *birds* the related words *fly, dive, build a nest,* and so, on are to be expected in the co-occurring discourse. Semantic prosody is the connotation which a form bestows on its collocates. For example, certain words or phrases (such as *an outbreak of*) would typically occur in collocation with unpleasant events, such as war, disease, etc. Thus if *an outbreak of* would co-occur with a positive word like *peace* as in the attested *an outbreak of*

peace occurred on 12 January, this would constitute linguistic creativity because additional meaning is conveyed (compared to the more usual expression *peace was declared on 12 January*). This type of semantic unexpectedness or reversal is characterised by Kenny (2001: 103) as cases "where a number of units taken together create a meaning, and this meaning takes precedence over the 'dictionary meaning' of the word". The example given by Kenny (2001: 103) of semantic reversal is the expression *borders on the holy*, where *holy* is interpreted as an abnormal mental state; a more usual expression would be *borders on the insane*.

In this section, I have shown briefly that the lexis in a text or discourse forms certain typical patterns, and that the expectations established by these patterns can be creatively overturned by speakers to create new meanings.

In conclusion: Three characteristics of lexical creativity have been highlighted in this discussion:

- Lexical creativity involves the creation of new lexical items both by means of the more productive and predictable word-formation processes (derivations, compounding and reduplication), as well as the apparently less productive and predictable innovations by means of the word-creation strategies (such as clipping, blending, borrowing, etc.).

- Lexical creativity also involves the creation of new lexical items by changing

the meaning of existing forms, by such mechanisms as metaphor, metonymy, widening and narrowing.

- Lexical creativity also involves the speaker's lexical choices in making up any given expression in real discourse, both in terms of paradigmatic choices between (near) equivalent or related lexical items, as well as in terms of the syntagmatic choices which will determine their collocational patterns, and their unexpected reversals in discourse or texts.

3.2.2 Grammar

According to Chomsky (1966) linguistic creativity resides in the fact that speakers are able to produce and understand novel sentences. Syntactic creativity is seen as merely formal recursivity and excludes meaning. In this section I would like to briefly highlight three aspects of linguistic creativity at the systemic (or grammatical) level which show that recursion is not the only mechanism for grammatical creativity, and that meaning and function are crucially involved in linguistic creativity, also at the grammatical level.

Grammaticalisation as linguistic creativity:

Grammaticalisation refers to the processes and the framework whereby "grammatical forms and constructions arise, how they are used, and how they shape the language" (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 1). Grammaticalisation can be studied from two perspectives, the one being the diachronic perspective in which the "sources of grammatical forms and the typical pathways of change that affect

them" are studied (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 2, Lehmann 1993, Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 259). This temporal dimension of linguistic creativity was discussed in Section 3.1. Whilst syntactic recursion may be one of the ways that reflect the creativity of individual speakers, grammaticalisation in the historical perspective is a reflection of the cumulative creativity of a speech community in creatively changing the grammatical structure of their language (i.e. a socio-historical process). An example of diachronic grammaticalisation in English is the change in status of lexical verbs such as *may, can, must* and *do* which used to behave like normal main verbs in sentences to auxiliary verbs called modal verbs (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 46).

In the other perspective, grammaticalisation is seen as a discourse pragmatic phenomenon which reflects the "fluid patterns of language use" (i.e. an individual, cognitive process) (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 2). As Hopper and Traugott (1993: 67) put it:

> In speaking of communicative strategies and problem solving in the course of speaker-hearer interaction, we refer ... to strategies used by speakers and hearers in producing and understanding the flow of speech as it is created. In our view, these strategies draw upon general cognitive processes...

An example of this kind of grammaticalisation is the reduction of full grammatical forms in rapid speech, such as *(be) going to* as *(be) gonna* and *I will* to *I'll* (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 64-65). Various motivations or cognitive processes play a role in these kinds of reductions, such as economy, efficiency, clarity and routinisation (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 67). Grammaticalisation (in both the diachronic and

the individual discourse-pragmatic perspective) is therefore also a reflection of linguistic creativity.

The choice of grammatical construction:

Grammaticalisation from a discourse-pragmatic perspective suggests another type of grammatical creativity, namely the creativity involved in the choice of a grammatical construction. The same propositional content can be expressed by various grammatical constructions. For example,

(a)   *Jacek sold his old boots to Adam for ten rand.*

(b)   *Jacek charged Adam ten rand for his old boots.*

(c)   *Adam paid ten rand for Jacek's old boots.*

In whatever way a syntactic theory would represent these three constructions, the issue here is that speakers make a choice of the grammatical construction with which they want to convey a specific propositional content. As was pointed out by Hopper and Traugott (1993) in the case of grammaticalisation, cognitive processing seems to play a role in this type of choice (cf. also Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 171-231). Even though the three expressions are based on the same basic event structure (cf. Fillmore (1968)), the event is construed differently in each case. For example, in (b), *Jacek* is foregrounded as the agent of the action, whereas in (c) *Adam* is foregrounded as the agent of the action.

Including the choice of grammatical construction in this survey of linguistic

creativity may seem controversial as well. The argument may be that the choice of grammatical construction is a predictable outcome of a communicative intention, and if the communicative intention is X (e.g. an illocution or a speech act like requesting the salt), the form must be a locution Y accompanied by *please*, e.g. *Please pass me the salt*. This argument, however, erroneously assumes a one-to-one correlation between communicative intent and grammatical construction. All manner of <u>indirect</u> speech acts can achieve the same result or perlocution (e.g. *You forgot to put salt in the food, Is there salt on the table? Are you watching my blood pressure again?*). A speaker can choose from a large variety of expressions and grammatical constructions which will be creatively produced, and then creatively construed by the hearer, who might respond to it in a certain way. This interaction will create one <u>kind</u> of discourse as opposed to another possible one.

The semantic extension of grammatical constructions:

In general, the idea that one form (or one grammatical construction) represents one meaning, and one meaning is represented by one form, has been accepted over the years in certain circles in linguistics (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 71). In a more extreme version of this assumption, generative grammar has even assumed that more than one construction (for example, both the active and the passive which are related by meaning preserving transformations) express the same meaning in terms of their propositional content but excluding pragmatic meaning. In the discussion above it was already shown that a speaker can exercise a choice in the expression of the same propositional content (one meaning) by means of

various forms (or grammatical constructions). The converse, in which one form (or grammatical construction) has more than one meaning represents another aspect of linguistic creativity. On the other hand, they can also use these structures creatively in ways that cannot be anticipated and spelled out exhaustively. An example of the extension of a syntactic construction is the metaphorical extension of the transitive construction. Examples in which the English transitive construction (NP_1 V_{trans} NP_2) is extended beyond its prototypical conventional limits, are: *He swam the* Channel where the Channel as Patient is seen in an adversative relationship with the agent, or, *The book sold a million* copies where the Patient is in the more typical NP_1 / Agent position. After discussing these types of extensions, Taylor (1991: 220, Footnote 5) makes the following comment:

> ... we may observe that a speaker's linguistic creativity may extend a construction beyond its conventional limits.

Vinokur (1923: 365) claims that the only "real creation in language is not a matter of creating neologisms but of the unusual application" of the grammatical elements in language. This type of what he calls 'grammatical creation' provides the language user not with new elements, but with new linguistic *relations* amongst grammatical elements. As De Saussure (1960: 169) says, "…the constant substitution of new forms for old ones is one of the most striking features in the transformation of languages".

In conclusion: In this brief overview of grammatical phenomena that reflect

linguistic creativity, we have seen that

X   linguistic creativity involves both changes in form and changes in meaning

which may occur simultaneously and / or separately, and

X   linguistic creativity involves the choice of a speaker, which may in turn be

related to both the larger discourse structures, cognitive processing and

pragmatics.

The ways in which the larger discourse structures and cognitive processing is involved in linguistic creativity will be addressed in the next section.

3.2.3 Discourse

Linguistic creativity does not occur in isolation or out of context. Apart from cases where the speaker is thinking quietly to him or herself, or communicating "inwardly" by talking to him or herself, acts of linguistic creativity occur as part of an external and social communicative process. In Section 3.2 when I discussed the motivations for linguistic creativity, it was clear that social and communicative 'statements' that are reflections of status and group solidarity, make up a large part of why speakers are linguistically creative. And in one sense, *the development and ultimate creation of new languages* in the form of pidgins and creoles is a larger step in linguistic creativity.

As far as the linguistic creativity of a speaker in a specific communicative setting is

concerned, the following choices of a speaker play a role in creating one type of discourse rather than another:

- The language user's choice of *code* involves the choice of a language in a multilingual setting, or the choice of a particular dialect or register. Code-switching by one participant, or between participants, can also be seen as actively creating one particular type of discourse rather than another. Even choosing between formulaic forms such as *Good morning* as opposed to *Hi there!* will affect the register of the following discourse, and speaker and hearer together will create one conversation rather than a possible other conversation. Conversations are notoriously unpredictable in how they develop, which does not make them unusual or abnormal; it simply means that one particular conversation, fully contextualised in its setting with its participants and in a particular time and place is created.

- The language user's choice of *medium* involves the choice of the spoken, written or signed medium for a particular message. Within the choice of medium, choices about text type have to be made. For example, once the written medium is chosen, the writer has a variety of genres with which to convey a given message.

- The language user can also be creative in the *delivery* of the text or discourse. For example, in spoken discourse an academic paper can be read (literally read as it is written) or it can be delivered as a more informal speech or an interactive presentation involving the audience in role play. These choices by a speaker may range from the standard and conventional

(reading of a written paper) to the less usual and unconventional (role play in a formal lecture situation), or in the way that mulitmedia is incorporated in a presentation (having background music in a formal lecture). There may therefore be degrees of creativity involved, but the point is that by making a choice about the delivery, the speaker creates one particular discourse (type) rather than another. In written discourse, the creative use of orthography (such as the unconventional use of capital letters, non-standard spelling and idiosyncratic hyphenation) to convey specific meanings has been reported on by Kenny (2001).

The question: *How are language users linguistically creative*? is ambiguous. In the first sense, the question asks what makes creativity possible in a human being. In a sense, this thesis as a whole addresses this part of the question. In the next paragraphs, I would like to briefly address the second issue subsumed under this question, namely whether speakers can be consciously aware of their creativity, and whether speakers can be deliberate in their creativity.

According to Lyons (1981: 25), speakers' creative command of their language, "is in normal circumstances unconscious and unreflecting. He [the speaker - BEZ] is generally unaware of applying any grammatical rules or systematic principles of formation when he constructs either new sentences or sentences he has previously encountered". What Lyons refers to as "normal circumstances" are the most frequent and the usual instances of linguistic expression and creativity by

most speakers. Apparently less frequent and unusual instances (which will, however, not be explored here) include

- linguistic games and speech play (such as a puns, riddles, jokes and play languages) (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Backhouse1976)

- literary and poetic creations

- advertising language (Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004)

- the planned development of languages (where new terminologies are created)

- the translation or verbal interpreting of existing text or discourse (Kenny 2001) and

- the creation of new 'languages' such as Fanagalo, Esperanto and Elvish (in Tolkien's novels).

In these types of cases, the speaker is being *deliberately* creative, and may be both conscious of the creativity of the linguistic act, as a well as conscious of the means by which the creativity is achieved. For example, in the creation of new terminologies for developing languages, committees and boards are constituted (consisting of experts in the relevant field, lexicographers and terminologists) whose explicit brief it is to create terms in a given domain for a developing language. The members of these committees are both consious and deliberate in their efforts, and the process can be stretched over a long period of time. Committee members may actively, deliberately and consciously experiment with various word-formation processes, test the outcomes on colleagues and other

mother-tongue speakers and return for further discussions. This kind of creativity may be 'collective' in a sense, but it still constitutes linguistic creativity. An example of this kind of process was witnessed in the formal deliberations in a terminology committee around whether the English geophysical term *bird,* referring to an airborne geophysical instrument, should be translated into *voël* ('bird') or *vlieënde geofisiese instrumentasie* ('flying geophysical instrumentation') in Afrikaans.

Also, whilst lay people often think that poets have instantaneous flashes of inspiration, many poets have left us with various versions of poems which show painstaking, deliberate and conscious revisions (cf. for example the 88 translations of the poem *A une Damoyselle malade* into English in Hofstadter (1997)). The deliberateness and consciousness does, however, not make them less creative in any given sense, and the unusualness and infrequency of any of the examples above should not exclude them from a discussion of linguistic abilities and creativity. It remains an open question whether the types of linguistic creativity listed above are, in fact, as infrequent and unusual as they are claimed to be.

The structures and processes that underlie the linguistic abilities of fluent mother-tongue speakers are usually thought to be present at an unconscious level. They are also regarded as automatic, especially in spoken language. In some cases of linguistic creativity, the metalinguistic skills of speakers (or writers) may, however, be employed consciously and deliberately to achieve certain linguistic effects. An

interesting issue to pursue would be whether spoken or written language is more creative, whether linguistic creativity is more conscious and deliberate in spoken language or in written language, and whether certain types of linguistic creativity are more prevalent in one or the other medium.

Cognitive processes in linguistic creativity:

In the discussion up to now, the notions of 'construal' and 'cognitive processes' have been identified as factors in linguistic creativity. We have also seen that in all the cases of linguistic creativity that have been discussed so far, the idea of the 'making' of new meaning or significances is central. In one sense then, the conceptual structures and processes that underlie linguistic creativity are the essence of linguistic creativity, and will be the central theme of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

What has not been explored in this survey of linguistic creativity is the way in which phonological processes such as rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeiac expressions, and even non-linguistic sounds are creative, and to what extent they 'have meaning'. For example, does alliteration in a poem contribute to the meaning that is being created, or, does an irritated click sound in a conversation contribute to the meaning of a conversation? In view of the pervasiveness of linguistic creativity as a meaning making activity, I would think so. But just as the initial survey that was conducted here should be extended and empirically substantiated, the question of the role of phonological creativity is an empirical one that needs further

investigation.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have re-investigated the phenomenon of linguistic creativity. I have tried to show that linguistic creativity is a multi-dimensional problem that is worth investigating in its own right. The numerous interesting avenues for research that were raised during this discussion also bear testimony to the fact the linguistic creativity is a fruitful way of approaching the study of the linguistic abilities of speakers.

By investigating the scope of linguistic creativity and by giving an overview of creativity in lexis, grammar and discourse, it is clear that the creative aspects of language is such an integral, wide-ranging and multi-dimensional part of our linguistic abilities, that we can hardly ignore it. There are several ways of going about studies of linguistic creativity. These various approaches will be listed below and evaluated critically. Linguistic creativity can be regarded as an unusual and infrequent aspect of linguistic performance that can only be studied when the linguistic system, and our basic linguistic knowledge and abilities are fully, or at least better understood. This approach would effectively mean that the study of linguistic creativity needs to be shelved since we do not, as yet, have such a complete understanding, nor are we likely to have it in the near future. It is my view, however, that studying linguistic creativity may, in fact, contribute to a better and fuller understanding of the linguistic abilities of human beings, and it should

therefore not be shelved. The formal aspects of linguistic creativity (such as word-formation rules and grammaticalisation) can be studied without taking the semantic (including the conceptual and communicative) aspects into account, on the view that the creation of new concepts and ideas is not part of the study of our linguistic knowledge. This would, in effect, amount to reducing linguistic creativity to productivity, as was done before. This reductionist approach has been tried in the generative view of linguistic creativity and has not led to any insights regarding creativity as was shown in Section 2.2. Both the formal and semantic (including the conceptual and communicative) aspects of linguistic creativity can be studied with the assumption that new concepts and ideas are already present in the mind of the speaker, and only need to be expressed in some linguistic form. This view is in effect a division of labour between linguistics and cognition, and as long as it does not lead to the automatic and uncritical assumption that creative ideas and creative language are so different in kind, that they should be handled by different modules or faculties, it can lead to fruitful investigation. Linguistic creativity can also be viewed as a reflection of both our linguistic and conceptual abilities at maximum performance, so to speak, and is therefore an essential, although not the only, window into what constitutes our linguistic and conceptual abilities.

At the end of Chapter 2, it was shown that Chomsky has pronounced linguistic creativity a mystery, but it is my view that admitting to "mysteries" in human cognition is defeatist, and I will therefore attempt to pursue linguistic creativity along the lines sketched above. It has become clear in the course of this

investigation, that linguistic creativity is in essence about 'making new meanings', particularly if one accepts the point of view that 'new forms' also, in effect, signal 'new meanings'. Based on the discussions in this chapter, I therefore propose the following working definition for **linguistic creativity**:

> *(Linguistic) Creativity is an essential and pervasive, but multi-dimensional characteristic of all human beings (irrespective of age, education, intelligence, social status or (non)-artistic bent). Linguistic creativity is primarily the online activity of **making new meaning** by a speaker (in the broadest sense of the user of language in all forms and in all mediums), and the re-creation and re-interpretation of meaning(s) by a receiver. Linguistic creativity is secondarily observable as a feature or product in a language. Linguistic creativity is a graded phenomenon ranging from the more conventional and predictable to the less conventional and unpredictable, and it is manifested in all domains of language (lexis, grammar, text and discourse, as well as medium), the results of which may or may not become conventionalised and therefore entrenched in a particular language.*

This is in accordance with Ward et al.'s (1997: 18) statement that "[c]reativity may even be better thought of as the entire system by which processes operate on structures to produce outcomes that are novel but nevertheless rooted in existing knowledge". This statement by Ward et al. reflects the distinction between the basis of creativity ("structures" and "existing knowledge"), the mental or conceptual making of new meaning ("processes") involved in creativity, and the products of

creativity ("outcomes") which are novel, varied and unlimited. The focus in this chapter, particularly in the survey of linguistic creativity, has been on these products of linguistic creativity. In the remaining chapters the focus will be primarily on the structures and processes that make linguistic creativity possible.

The characteristic of linguistic creativity that it is a matter of degree means that it can be placed along a continuum on which the basis of the linguistic creativity (i.e. the degree to which there is a precedent in the linguistic repertoire of the language on which to base the creativity) can be used as a parameter. On such a continuum, structural productivity (i.e. the predictable and productive re-creation of many instantiations based on the same structural pattern or rule) can be regarded as one end of the continuum (where both the structural pattern and the inserted lexical forms are existing parts of the language, and the outcome is predictable). This end of the continuum would represent the traditional generative view of linguistic creativity as productivity (cf. Figure 3.2). At this end of the continuum the focus is on new forms which are, however, an indication of new meaning. For the most part, the formal patterns that are used by speakers are fixed and rely on the existing knowledge base of the speaker. The outcomes of this kind of creativity would be more predictable. In the lexical domain word-formation rules such as compounding and derivation would fall at this end of the continuum. At the other end of the continuum would be pure semantic innovation, here called conceptual creativity (i.e. the creation of new and unpredictable concepts). Conceptual creativity has little precedent, for example, unpredictable word-creation strategies,

or other cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor are part of the language, but the new meaning created by them is unpredictable. Literary or artistic creativity can be placed anywhere along the continuum since it may use the entire range of types of creativity, from structural productivity to conceptual creativity. The continuum can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

structural   **conceptual**
productivity   **creativity**

[Intercategorial polysemy]
[Exocentric compounding]

greater reliance   less reliance
on existing base,   on existing base,
outcome more predictable   outcome less
e.g. WFRs like derivation   predictable
and endocentric compounding   e.g. metaphor,
                                                                           metonymy and word-
                                                                           creation strategies

Figure 3.2 *A continuum of creativity*

As indicated in Figure 3.1, the possible end-points of the continuum have been identified. However, to make this into a proper continuum, some examples along the middle range of the continuum have to be identified. In the lexical domain such an example in the middle range would be a case where there is a systematic and productive pattern that relies on the existing lexical base but which has a less predictable outcome than a standard word-formation process. One such a case would be exocentric nominal compounds, where the pattern is a standard and productive pattern (such as for example, N + N), but where the meaning of the

compound can not be derived from the meaning of the constituting elements, e.g. *sole food* (foot medication for runners) (from Van Niekerk and Jenkinson 2004). Another such a case would be intercategorial polysemy in English where the formal shift in word class (from noun to verb) does not consistently give a predictable meaning. Since intercategorial polysemy falls in the middle of this continuum between the end-points of structural productivity and pure conceptual creativity, it is an excellent candidate for studying the multi-dimensional nature of linguistic creativity. All the examples in Figure 3.2 are taken from the lexical domain since that is the main focus in this thesis. It remains an empirical issue whether this continuum can be reproduced for other domains such as grammar and discourse.

In their discussion of Croce's work, Burke et al. (2000: 15-16) state that all human knowledge is founded in the active powers and faculties of human beings, in being able to respond to, organize and arrange sensory stimuli by creating meaningful mental representations. Croce uses the term **expression** for the act of producing meaningful mental representations, and this type of expression has two characteristics (note that Croce's 'expression' need not necessarily be 'linguistic expression' in the narrow sense). The first is that expression is a creative process in that it involves the production of representations of knowledge and concepts, and shapes our experience. The second characteristic is that these mental representations consist of 'particulars' rather than abstract and generalised knowledge about concepts. In Chapter 4, I will therefore focus on approaches to the meaning and mental representation of concepts. By focusing on meaning and

mental representation I will show that linguistic creativity does not only constitute an empirical descriptive problem (as the survey in this chapter has suggested), but that linguistic creativity can also be regarded as a theoretical problem, i.e. what can the nature of linguistic creativity tell us about the linguistic abilities of language users? I will, therefore attempt to show how an awareness of linguistic creativity as phenomenon might change the way we do linguistics and how we evaluate linguistic theories. Linguistic creativity, both as an empirical domain and as a theoretical problem will be the focus of Chapters 5-7 where I will look at the way in which linguistic theories can account for linguistic creativity in the lexical domain as an ability of all speakers of a language.