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## DERIVATIONAL NEOLOGISMS IN CHILDREN'S SPEECH FROM POLISH AND ENGLISH DATA

*Words are not coined to extract the meanings of their elements and compile a new meaning from them. The new meaning is there **first**, and the coiner is looking for the best way to express it without going to too much trouble (Bolinger 1975:109).*

This paper constitutes an attempt to discuss the phenomenon of lexical innovations in children's speech in English and Polish, that is words not adopted from the environment, but constructed on the spur of the moment, possibly in accordance with the word formation rules operating in the two languages. In what follows I will be concerned with both linguistic and psychological factors determining the occurrence of these coinages, as well as the ingenious techniques employed by children for producing novel words,<sup>1</sup> focusing on the morphological differences between English and Polish. What is more, I am going to reflect on the profound influence of lexical innovation on the process of language acquisition. Since this topic is almost inexhaustible, I am forced to limit my considerations only to some aspects of the above mentioned issues.

The relevant data have been drawn from several sources. The empirical material available for Polish consists of extensive longitudinal language sampling combined with cross-sectional elicitation studies of children between 2;0 and 6;0 conducted by Chmura-Klekotowa in 1950s and 1960s, who based her work on Baudouin de Courtneay's parental diaries of his own children between 1887 and 1904. Her elicitation tasks were devised so as to find out which derivational options children preferred when they were asked to form words for unfamiliar objects or actions (Baudouin de Courtneay 1974; Chmura-Klekotowa 1964,1970,1971). Besides, I have carried out detailed longitudinal observations

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<sup>1</sup> Since derived verbs and nouns are the most frequent among young children, the core of this paper is limited mainly to these coinages.

of my own daughter between the ages of 1;0 and 3;0 which comprise systematic tape-recordings complemented by the diary of her linguistic development.

As far as English is concerned, the examples come mainly from the diary data drawn primarily from children under six, gathered by Clark, Bowerman, Kuczaj, Hetch, Mulford and Carpenter and also the corpus from vocabulary studies collected by Clark (Clark, Hetch and Mulford 1986; Bowerman 1982b; Clark 1978a, 1982a; Kuczaj 1977; Clark and Carpenter 1991).

### Coinages fill gaps

The analysis of the situations in which the neologisms are formed allows us to say that children usually feel an irresistible impulse to create a new word whenever:

- 1) they are faced with some elements of extralinguistic reality such as: objects, functions or features for which they have not adequate labels in their vocabulary. For example, my daughter (2;10), while clearing up the mess she had made, referred to the brush she used as *sprzątaczka* “something to tidy with” from *sprzątać* “to tidy”<sup>2</sup> by adding the nominal feminine instrumental suffix *-ka* (which, however, can also be agentive because it is used to denote feminine agents, eg. *kelnerka* “waitress”) to the verb *sprzątać*.
- 2) they attempt to respond to the previous adult utterances, pondering on the internal structure of words heard before and trying to imitate and apply principles governing word formation in their own speech. Therefore, we can put forward the claim that coining new words accompanies inherently mastering the basics of the word formation system and rules for making derivatives in a given language. This process takes place between 2;0 and 3;0 and at the same time coincides with the so called *vocabulary spurt*<sup>3</sup> (cf. Chmura-Klekotowa (1967) and Clark (1993)).

Now let us proceed to point out the distinctive traits of the child’s psyche conducive to deriving novel words by means of analogy. First and foremost, language has for the young child two basic functions: communicative and cognitive. Cognitive function of the language consists in differentiating between

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<sup>2</sup> Let me remark that this is an example of both derivational and semantic neologism, because apart from instrumental nominalization we can see here that the noun *sprzątaczka* meaning here “brush” already has a conventional meaning well-established in the lexicon, that is “cleaning lady”.

<sup>3</sup> There is no unanimity as to how this term should best be defined, for example as Clark (1993:26) puts it, it can be seen as either *the attainment of a certain level of mastery in articulatory plans for production* or *the evidence that children have grasped the point of language as a symbolic system*. However, there is no doubt that it always means a rapid growth in the number of lexical items being acquired by the child.

various entities from the closest environment and at the same time classifying them.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that these two functions are equally important for the child, whereas in the adult world the communicative function of the language is of primary magnitude.

Furthermore, in this period of life we can observe the so called cause-and-effect thinking which is reflected in the child's growing awareness of the fact that some verbs are derived from others, with the simultaneous insufficient command of the meaning and usage of morphemes. Thus, children come up with a wide variety of coinages not acceptable in the adult language. As an example supporting this claim let me focus on deriving denominal verbs in Polish: K. (2;11), pushing her doll in the pram: *Zobacz, jak szybko wózkuję* [Look, how quickly I am pram-ing], where *wózkuję*, inf. *wózkować* "to pram" is formed from *wózek* "pram", meaning "to push the pram" with the verbalising (1 SG) suffix *-uję* added to the noun, cf. correct *Popatrz jak szybko pcham wózek*. "Look, how quickly I am pushing the pram".

The same phenomenon is widespread in English as well, however, as denominal verbs are most often formed there by young children through zero-derivation, which is much more productive than affixation,<sup>5</sup> let me give some evidence from deverbal instrumental and agentive nominalizations. English-speaking children frequently add suffix *-er* to verb roots in order to coin words for agents and instruments as in *cooker* (2;4) for "somebody who cooks" or *presser* (3;0) for "something to press" (in this case a button).<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes children also fail to isolate words in a sentence or morphemes within a word, which leads to creation of curious expressions, which are not

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<sup>4</sup> As an example I would like to quote the fragment of the conversation between me and my daughter K.:

K. (at 2;8 she asked me, pointing in the direction of a potato masher): *Do czego to jest?* "What is it for?"

M.: *Do tłuczenia ziemniaków*. "It's for mashing potatoes".

K.: *To już wiem. To jest do tłuczenia, ubijania ziemniaków. Czyli to jest ubijanka*. "Now I know. It is for mashing, beating potatoes. So it is a beater".

In this way she coined a new word: "beater" from *ubijać* "to beat" (cf. correct *tluczek do ziemniaków* "potato masher"). Thus, we may conclude that by means of instrumental nominalization (although using not a typically instrumental but rather a multifunctional fem. suffix *-anka*) she classified the potato masher as "something to mash or to beat with". An interesting example from English would be forming an innovative compound noun (further information concerning this problem will be provided in the section on noun coinages): D. (2;3), rejecting a striped T-shirt: *I want my boat-shirt* (Clark 1993), so a *boat-shirt* should be understood as "the shirt with a boat on it".

<sup>5</sup> Using conversion in adult English for deriving verbs has been available for several centuries and is still the most productive option for coining new verbs entering the lexicon (Adams (1973) or Ljung (1974)). This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the section devoted to verbalization.

<sup>6</sup> These examples come from elicitation studies (Clark and Hetch (1982)).

derivational neologisms *sensu stricto*; since they represent a certain phase in the child's understanding of word formation, let me quote just one example from my diary studies. Having listened to the following part of the rhyme entitled „Sójka” by Jan Brzechwa: *Po ciotuni jeszcze sójka/Odwiędziła w mieście wujka*, where *ciotunia* is a feminine diminutive noun, formed with the suffix *-unia*, “After (the visit at) her aunt the jay called on her uncle”, K. (3;0) asked me: *Dlaczego sójka odwiedziła po-ciotunię?* [Why did the jay visit her after-aunt?], (cf. correct *Dlaczego sójka odwiedziła ciotunię?* “Why did the jay visit her aunt?”).

When it comes to the faulty division into morphemes, I would like to quote the following example: K. (2;11): *Daj mi dużą szyn-ę*. (cf. correct *szynkę*) “Give me the big (slice of) ham”. In this case she treated *szynka* as the diminutive feminine form of *szyna* (and decided to use the latter form in order to emphasize the fact that she wanted a really big slice), forming it by adding suffix *-ka* to the noun stem *szyn-*, evidently making an analogy with the pairs of feminine nouns, such as: *brama-bramka* “gate”, *słoma-słomka* “straw”, etc., where the second element in the pair is the diminutive form.

Another interesting psychological remark would be that children tend to regard objects as instruments or outcomes of activities. Thus, for my daughter (2;10) the lock in the car door has become *otworzenie*, (that is “something which gets opened”), “the opening” from *otwierać*, meaning “to open”. In English I have come across *climber* (Clark 1987) standing for a ladder, i.e. “something that you use to climb”.

Finally, I would like to talk in brief about the occurrence of innovative rhymes in children's speech, which is not a productive way of forming novel utterances, nevertheless it substantiates Czukowski's statement that *each child becomes for a short while a brilliant linguist, but after s/he turns five or six this genius vanishes irrevocably* (Czukowski 1962:129).<sup>7</sup> For that purpose, let me quote some examples from Chmura-Klebotowa (1967:436): G. (4;5) produced: *mamico-wilkico*, addressing his mother “mother-wolf” using the feminine suffix *-ico* twice in order to form two pejorative nouns, and at 2;4: *konik-polnik*, instead of *konik polny* “grasshopper”, where two diminutive masculine suffixes *-ik* have been attached to the noun and (incorrectly) to the adjective stem in order to make the phrase rhyme. Some of these have also been created by my daughter K. (2;8): *kremka-nivelka* “Nivea cream”, where again feminine suffix *-ka* probably with the intended diminutive meaning has been attached to the masculine noun *krem* “cream” and the proper name *Nivea*; or: *ja sama, mama*, after a while being converted into: *ja samka mamka* “Mum, (I'll do this) myself”, using the same suffix as previously that is *-ka* for the reflexive pronoun *sama* “myself” and the feminine noun *mama* “mum”.

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<sup>7</sup> Translation mine.

## Deriving innovative nouns in Polish

Derived nouns in any language of the world constitute the largest percentage of all coinages created by children because labels for object categories are the most numerous in their speech. Of all the innovations analysed for Polish, 50% were novel nouns (Chmura-Klektowa 1971). As for English, the data from the corpus collected by Clark (Clark 1987;1993) show that children produce on average one or two innovative nouns a day. However, discussing this process, we should bear in mind the fact that it proceeds along different paths in the two languages. In Polish the alternative favoured by children for deriving nouns is suffixation, whereas in English, especially in the early period of linguistic development, compounding. Yet, both in English and in Polish more productive models of word formation are preferred to less productive ones, which is parallel to their usage in adult speech. Let me now tackle in my analysis the most productive options for coining nouns as well as give some examples.

As it has been stated above, the vast majority of novel nouns are derived by suffixation and the forms coined are mainly denominal, deverbal and deadjectival nominalizations (Chmura-Klektowa 1971). In sharp contrast with English, there is only a handful of compounds produced, which are agentive for the most part. Chmura-Klektowa (1967) has recorded the following examples: *oknołaz* from *okno* “window” and *lazić* “to hang around” for “someone who works on windows”, or *mlekojad* from *mleko* “milk” and *jadać* “to eat” for “someone who eats (drinks) milk”. In fact, K. (2;9) produced a very similar compound to that: *chlebojad* from *chleb* “bread” and *jadać* “to eat” for “someone who eats bread”.<sup>8</sup>

Now let us move on to the most productive derivational models. The largest category of innovative nouns is that produced as a result of instrumental and agentive nominalizations (deverbal and denominal) with the most frequently used suffix *-acz*, (feminine *-aczka*), which is also the most productive. It has been used in such neologisms as: *plakacz* from *plakać* “to cry” for “somebody who cries” or *stukacz* from *stuc* “to break” for “somebody who breaks things”. This suffix has been used mostly on agents alongside with *-ek* as in *pośpieszek* from *pośpieszyć się* “to hurry up” (perf.) for “somebody who hurries up”, *-arz* as in *dzwoniarz* from *dzwonić* “to ring a bell” for “somebody who rings bells” or *studniarz* from *studnia* “well” probably for “somebody who is mending the well”,<sup>9</sup> or *-ik* in *asfaltownik* from *asfalt* “asphalt” for “somebody who is laying asphalt on the surface of the road” and *kopalnik* from *kopalnia* “mine” for adult

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<sup>8</sup> This is the only compound my daughter (now 3;0) has produced so far, which is another piece of evidence that compounds in young Polish children’s speech are virtually non-existent.

<sup>9</sup> The above examples of nominalization are drawn from Chmura-Klektowa (1967), but the analysis and interpretation is mine, therefore the meaning of *studniarz* can be a little ambiguous.

*górnik* “miner”. A curious and marginal case is forming agentive nouns from prepositional phrases as in *zagraniista* with the suffix *-ista* from *za granicę* “abroad” for “somebody who goes abroad”.

Suffixes favoured for instruments are the following: *-ka* (fem.) or *-ek* as in the above mentioned *ubijanka* (see footnote 4), or K. (2;10): *kołysanka* from *kołysać* “to swing” for “something that makes you swing”, cf. adult *huśtawka* “swing”,<sup>10</sup> *-dło* as in *trzymadło* from *trzymać* “to hold” for “something that you use to hold”, also *-acz* or *-aczka* as in *zakrywaczka* from *zakrywać* “to cover” for adult *pokrywka* “cover”. In my vocabulary records I have found an unusual example of deverbal instrumental nominalization (K. (2;4) with the suffix *-anie*, which is not productive for that category at all, in the coinage *czesanie* from *czesać* “to comb” for “something that you use to comb your hair with”, adult *grzebień* “comb”). The suffix *-anie* will be discussed below in its more productive realizations.

Children also use often suffixes *-anie* and *-enie* to talk about affected objects, that is in the resultative nominalizations. Thus, to quote Chmura-Klebotowa (1967) the coinage *narysowanie* from *narysować* “to draw” (perf.) stands for adult *rysunek* “drawing” that is, “something that has been drawn”, *piski*, formed with the unproductive for that category suffix *-ki* from *pisać* “to write” (imperf.) for adult *litory* “letters”, that is “something that has been written”. My own example from K. (2;6) is *zaplątanie* from *zaplątać* “to tangle” for “something that has been tangled” (to satisfy the reader’s curiosity, let me explain that *zaplątanie* stands for a piece of string tangled around the cupboard door handles to prevent them from being opened).

Having analysed some of the most typical representative nominalizations of Polish children, now I am going to focus on novel nouns in English.

## Deriving innovative nouns in English

Obviously, English as a word order language offers a different range of alternatives for coining new words than inflectional Polish. As it has been remarked before, English has two major options for forming new nouns: compounding and derivation with the former being much more productive than the latter at the early stage of linguistic development.<sup>11</sup> English children produce two basic types of compounds: *root compounds* formed from two or more nouns

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to remark that Kinga produced this novel noun as if forgetting that she had acquired adult *huśtawka* “swing” already some months before.

<sup>11</sup> In adult English, according to, eg. Szymanek (1998:36), compounding is a *very natural mechanism of putting words together* and therefore fairly productive as well.

as in *house-key* and *synthetic compounds* from one or two nouns combined with a verb, eg. *push-chair* (Clark 1993).

The data collected by Clark (1993) and the results from experimental studies designed to elicit labels for yet unnamed objects (Clark, Gelman and Lane 1985; Gelman, Wilcox and Clark 1985) show clearly the prevalence of compounding in young children's speech.

As far as the classification of these innovative compounds is concerned, it appears that both the earliest and the commonest type consists of noun-noun combinations.<sup>12</sup> Thus, to give some examples of early coinages: D. (2;0) coined: *tea-sieve* for "strainer", *candle-cake* for "birthday cake", *plate-egg* for "fried egg", *car-smoke* for "exhaust fumes", *coffee-churn* for "coffee-grinder" and *lion-book* for "fairy tale about the lion". As children grow older, this type accounts for a decreasing proportion of innovative compounds, giving way to synthetic compounds.

Synthetic compounds can be further subdivided into the following groups: nouns combined with bare verbs, such as *shoot-plane* for "the plane from which someone is shooting", *wash-man* for "the man who is having something washed", *hug-kid* for "the child who is being hugged" or *break-bottle* for "the bottle that has been broken", which obviously are grammatically incorrect.<sup>13</sup>

Still another group consists of nouns plus verbs with affixes added, mainly *-er* for agents and instruments and *-ing* for instruments and affected objects *cutter-glass*, *puller-wagon*, *water-drinker*, *moving-box* or *throwing-ball*.

This process runs parallel with the gradual emergence of nouns derived by suffixation. However, children use just a few suffixes in their spontaneous innovations: *-er* on verb roots for agents and instruments as in *teaser* for "someone who fools around and teases" or *lockers* for "locks", *-ness* for forming *nomina essendi* such as *angriness* for "the state of being angry" or *stronginess* for "the state of being strong", cf. correct adult *anger* and *strength*. Unlike in Polish, English children use only occasionally diminutive *-ie* as in *cattie* or *-y* as in *forky*. Finally, it is significant that zero-derivation is not productive for noun formation in child language as it is not productive in English on the whole.

## Deriving innovative verbs in Polish

Verbs are the second largest group of morphological neologisms both in English and Polish. For the formation of verbs Polish children rely most frequently on nouns. To support this claim, I would like to observe that

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<sup>12</sup> Again, this model goes hand in hand with the favoured options in adult language, where noun-noun combinations are the most widespread forms.

<sup>13</sup> Simplicity predicts that children will, at first, omit affixes.

denominal verbs have been the most common in my daughter's speech. She created them mainly by using the suffix *-ować* or *-yć* in the infinitive form plus conjugational endings. Accordingly, I have recorded K. (2;8) *wilczyć* from *wilk* "wolf" to refer to the sounds produced by the wolf, K. (2;7) *kucharzyć* from *kucharz* "cook" to talk about cooking, cf. adult *gotować* "to cook" or K. (2;11) causative *za-antenkować*, with the prefix *za-* added from *anten-ka* (with the diminutive, feminine suffix *-ka*) "aerial" in the following sentence: *Za-antenkuj mi tubisia*, which was supposed to mean "Fix the aerial on my teletubby".

Furthermore, the same conclusion can be drawn from the longitudinal and elicitation studies carried out by Chmura-Klekotowa (1971). In her data denominal nouns are formed overwhelmingly with the infinitive ending *-ować* plus conjugational inflections. G. (2;3) *Grześ młynkuje* (3 SG,<sup>14</sup> present), *młynkować* is coined from the noun *młynek* "grinder", meaning "to grind". Some other examples would be *doktorować* from *doktor* "doctor", meaning "to treat", *kelnerować* from *kelner* "waiter", meaning "to serve", *masłować* from *masło* "butter", meaning "to spread with butter" or *papugować* from *papuga* "parrot", meaning "to copy".

Quite frequently suffixation takes place simultaneously with prefixation in *po-oliwkować* (with the prefix *po-*) from *oliwka* "olive", meaning "to collect olives" or *za-kluczyć* (with the prefix *za-*) from *klucz* "key", meaning "to lock".

Deadjectival verbs are rare, just to give my own example, K. (2;11) coined *z-grącić* (with the prefix *z-*) from *gorący* "hot", meaning "to make hot".

Further group of coinages quite abundantly represented in my daughter's speech are verbs expressing momentary meaning which are formed with the suffix *-nąć* (inf.), *-nę* (1 SG), cf. Chmura-Klekotowa (1967:440): K. (2;10) *chcę tu zostać* from *zostać* "stay", meaning "I want to stay here" or K. (2;6) *zaraz skoknę* from *skoczyć* "to jump", meaning "I'll jump right away".

Eventually, let me consider the phenomenon of confusing prefixes attached to the correctly formed verb stems,<sup>15</sup> which is another inexhaustible source of lexical innovations. I would like to analyse this phenomenon on the basis of the examples from my longitudinal studies:<sup>16</sup> K. (2;10) *Dlaczego ten ptak z-lądował na dzióbie?* Instead of *wy-lądował* she used *z-lądował* (which is the word absent in adult Polish) with the prefix *z-* attached to *lądować* "to land", meaning "Why did this bird land on its beak?" Let me remark that she also failed to conform to the rule of allomorphy *o* → *ó* operating for some singular masculine nouns in the

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<sup>14</sup> Third person singular is acquired for self-reference before first person singular emerges, see Smoczyńska (1985).

<sup>15</sup> According to Chmura-Klekotowa (1967:438), children reproduce accurately the main semantic part of the verb, paying less attention to the form of the prefix, probably treating it as not crucial to the meaning of the verb as the whole and therefore not that important.

<sup>16</sup> For other coinages of this kind see Chmura-Klekotowa (1971).



Locative as in the pairs: *stół – stole, wór – worze*, etc., K. (2;10) *Popatrz, obcinają drzewa* (instead of adult *ścinają*) with the prefix *ob-*, where *obcinać* means “to cut”, whereas the correct form for this sentence should be *ścinają* “they are cutting down”, consequently the whole question was supposed to mean “Why are they cutting down the trees?”; or K. (3;0) *Za-suń mi krzesło*, where she used *za-suń* with the prefix *za-*, meaning “to draw” instead of the correct adult usage *przy-suń*, meaning “to push nearer”, so the intended meaning of this sentence would be “Push the chair nearer to me”.

Occasionally, the opposite process takes place, that is correct prefixes are attached to the verbs whose usage is inappropriate in a given context, as in K. (3;0, at the swimming pool): *Najpierw w-plusnę do wody a potem wy-plusnę*, where *wplusnę* and *wyplusnę* are 1 SG future tense forms from the verb *pluskać* “to splash”. Obviously, the verb that she should have used here is *skoczyć* “to jump” and this sentence in adult Polish would read as follows *Najpierw wskoczę do wody, a potem z niej wyskoczę* “First, I will jump into the water and then I will jump out of it”.

Mixing up prefixes is also widespread in the process of forming reversative verbs.<sup>17</sup> In the corpus collected by Chmura-Klekotowa the most prevalent prefix is *od-*, while there are also some cases of *roz-* and *wy-*. *Nacisnąłem pedał, a teraz odcisnąłem* (2;8) [I on-pushed-PERF the pedal and now I un-pushed it] “I pressed down on the pedal and then I unpressed”. *Zszyj mi, bo mi się kołderka rozszyła* (4;0) [Sew that up because my quilt has un-sewn] “Sew that up because my quilt has come undone”. As for *wy-* I would like to quote K. (2;10): *Wkładam to tutaj, a potem wykładam* [I put it here and then un-put it] “I put it here and then take it out”.

## Deriving innovative verbs in English

In English formation of verbs from nouns through zero-derivation is the most productive (see also footnote 5). D. (2;9) *Did you needle this?* “Did you mend this with a needle?”, D. (3;2) *I didn't blade myself* “I didn't cut myself with the blade”, D. (2;9) *And we can see the man oaring the boat* “And we can see the man rowing the boat”. Available records of children's spontaneous innovations list also some intransitive verbs, which are, however, less numerous than transitive ones,<sup>18</sup> for example: (2;4) *I am souping* for “I am eating soup”, (3;3) *The house is firing* for “The house is burning” or (1;10) *I noised* for “I made a noise”.

<sup>17</sup> On this issue see Marchand (1973:636).

<sup>18</sup> This can be just due to an accident of sampling (Bowerman 1982a; Lord 1979) or the conversational context (Braine *et al.* (1990)).

Apart from denominal zero-derivation which constitutes the vast majority of all coinages (72% according to Clark (1993:201), deadjectival zero-derivation is also relied on to some extent<sup>19</sup> as in (1;9): *I am talling* for “I am getting taller”, (2;6) *It is still soring* for “it is still feeling sore” (said of a scrape), (2;8) *I am darking the letters*, as the child scribbled over a drawing, (2;10) *I am pinking things* for “I am making things look pink”. As far as the inchoative suffix *-en* is concerned, children occasionally make use of it as in: D. (2;8) *fasten up* from the adjective *fast*, meaning “to go faster”, (4;2) *strongen* from *strong*, meaning “to strengthen” or (4;3) *This lace needs longening*, from the adjective *long*, meaning “This lace needs lengthening”.

Eventually, let me devote some space to the formation of reversative verbs. In English the notion of undoing or reversal, in contrast with Polish, can be expressed in several ways. First and foremost, reversative verbs can be derived by means of the productive prefix *un-* as in *fold* and *unfold*, secondly, through the use of verb particles such as *off*, as in the pair *turn on* and *turn off*. Moreover, reversal may be expressed suppletively as in *find* and *lose*. There are also some mixed verb cases where both verb and particle undergo a change, as in *put on* and *take off*.

Young children (basically between two and three) opt for particles to express reversal because particles are quite accessible linguistic units thanks to the fact that they require no changes in the verb root and they are phonologically salient since they typically carry stress. In general, particles are acquired earlier than prefixes (cf. Slobin (1973)), and therefore by the age of two children typically know several particle pairs, eg. *on/off*, *up/down*, *in/out*. Some typical early uses of particles for undoing would be: D. (2;6) *Make it sink up* as a reversal of “sink down”, *Not standing down* (2;3), meaning “[I’m] not lying down” as a reversal of “stand up” or *My buttons are undone*. *I don’t need them buttoned up*, *I need them buttoned down*, where *buttoned down* has been coined as a reversal of *buttoned up*.

However, since particles do not offer a productive way of expressing reversal, as children grow older they begin to use *un-* quite productively once they have identified its meaning, yet, very often without having acquired the relevant semantic class to which the prefix can be attached. This, again, leads to the consistent over-use of it on the verbs that conventionally don’t take it: D. (2;10) *I can’t make it undisappear* “I can’t make it re-appear”, (4;5) *Maybe it’s for unlighting the flame* “Maybe it’s for putting out the flame” or (3;4) *I’ll have to unhang it* “I’ll have to take it down”.

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<sup>19</sup> Compare with adult English, where deadjectival verbs are mainly causative formed with the suffixes: *-ize*, *-ify* and *-ate* or inchoative with the suffix *-en*. English children do not begin to use causative suffixes until five or even later.

Conventional pairs in which reversative verbs are derived by suppletion and do not fit any paradigms are acquired late since, in such cases, the rules of word formation are of no use and all the irregularities have to be learnt, which takes time.

## Conclusions

To sum up, coinages formed by the child are of no value from the point of view of diachronic linguistics; they do not contribute to enlarging vocabulary in any way; the only language users acquainted with and taking occasional advantage of them belong to the child's closest environment. Nonetheless, lexical innovations do not get established in their speech for long, on the contrary, these are temporary forms, some of which do not even recur in the child's utterances.

On the other hand, their role in the child's psychological and linguistic development cannot be underestimated since they play an indispensable role in mastering the rules of word formation. During this long-term process, the child handles the derivation in an unconstrained way, which many a time results in forming the words or utterances not acceptable in the adult language. However, owing to these persisting attempts, the child gradually acquires the rules of word formation and more and more frequently comes up with correct structures. This and also growing awareness of the permanence of word meanings leads to the total disappearance of derivational neologisms in spontaneous utterances at the age of seven or eight in the child language (Chmura-Klekotowa 1967).

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