

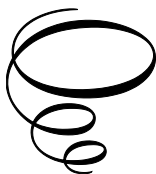
Multilingual Approaches to Communication

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Edited by

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CHAPTER I

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE USE

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE USE: INTRODUCTION

RALUCA SINU

This chapter brings together texts addressing different aspects pertaining to language structure and use. The contributions gathered here deal with language description at the phonological, morphological syntactic and pragmatic levels, approaching topics such as lexical creation, size and arrangement classifiers, weak nominals and strong definites, the acquisition of English phonology, politeness strategies and gender norms. Several of the authors resort to contrastive analyses to highlight common points and differences between English and other European languages, including Romanian, French, Spanish.

Effability, lexical creation and communication (Francisco Martín-Miguel) investigates the linguistic mechanisms behind lexical creation from the perspective of effability, understood as the capacity of humans to express themselves in words, in order to both convey the intended meaning and articulate thoughts and ideas in a clear and coherent manner. The author adopts a case-study approach analyzing examples of lexical creation built on analogical processes of morphological derivation, including suffixation in English and conversion in Spanish. The examples are also discussed from a sociolinguistic perspective meant to shed light on the complex process of linguistic decision-making when multiple lexical options are available. The last part of the analysis deals with the impact of the dynamic nature of communication on lexicography, as illustrated by the terms which emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, characterized by lack of standardization in their spelling, formatting and usage in both English and Spanish. This case study highlights the limitations of dictionaries in providing comprehensive information on emerging vocabulary, such as the one related to the pandemic.

(Metaphorical) Size and arrangement classifiers in English and Romanian (Mihaela Tănase-Dogaru) discusses classifiers N1s in sequences of the type *classifier + of + noun*, with a focus on classifiers referring to size, shape, and arrangement. Following a brief overview of

the main findings in the literature on binomial constructions, the author proposes a new taxonomy of classifier N1s in Romanian, taking into consideration the meaning of both nominal elements in the classifier construction. In her presentation of size and small size classifiers, shape classifiers, venery terms and ‘arrangement’ classifiers, Tănase-Dogaru puts forth the idea that classifiers in this type of constructions are not interchangeable, and that the meaning of the constructions is the result of the interaction of the N1 and N2 through a process of co-semiosis and metaphorization. Also, she concludes that classifiers can be arranged along a quantifier – qualifier continuum.

In **A look at the contrast between weak nominals and strong definites. The case of English** (Maria-Liana Ciucea), the author proposes a contrastive analysis of the behavioral patterns of weak nominals and strong definites in English. Relying on the theoretical accounts available in the literature, she discusses the features of these elements, such as their lack of referential identity, their dependence upon prepositional and verbal co-occurrences, the fact that they do not allow modification with restrictive modifiers, or that they do not occupy the subject position. Then the author illustrates the behavior of weak definites and bare singulars with the help of several diagnostic tests. The analysis is further expanded to include Romanian bare singulars. After presenting several Romanian bare institutional singulars in various contexts, she concludes that they display the same behavior as their English counterparts according to the three diagnostic tests implemented in the process.

Notes on the acquisition of English phonology by Romanian and French learners of English (Oana-Miruna Măchiță) explores the English vowel and consonant phonemes and allophones which hinder the acquisition of English phonology by both Romanian and French learners because they are perceived as being similar to phonemes or allophones in their L1. The data obtained by the author through an experiment testing the vowel phonemes /ʊ, u:, ɪ, i:, æ, ʌ/, the consonant phonemes /θ, ð, ŋ/, and the consonant allophones [ɫ, k^h, t^h] are interpreted using the Interlanguage theory and Brannen’s (2011) Auditory Distance Model. The author concludes that the above mentioned theories are supported by her evidence, vowel phoneme and allophone realisations by the tested groups of Romanian and French speakers belong to a linguistic system independent of Romanian, French and English, but are influenced by them.

Unlike the previous contributions, **Politeness strategies and gender norms in the TV drama series *The Crown* (2016)** (Alexandrina Ugrenova) deals with language use, not language structure. The paper

analyzes in terms of politeness strategies and gender roles several scenes from *The Crown* (2016), a TV drama series which presents both the public and private life of Queen Elizabeth II. The author focuses on the impact of gender norms, considering that the heroine fulfills the traditionally assigned male role of a monarch, stereotypically endowed with qualities such as strength, directness and even impoliteness, while women have traditionally been depicted as fragile, warm, polite and submissive. The scenes under investigation illustrate instances in which the heroine is forced to take on apparently opposing roles, wife or mother, on the one hand, and queen, on the other, in matters related to family life, or woman and monarch, in state matters. The contribution draws attention to the politeness strategies adopted by the heroine in navigating between the two roles.

EFFABILITY, LEXICAL CREATION AND COMMUNICATION

FRANCISCO MARTÍN-MIGUEL

Abstract. This article presents an investigation into the linguistic mechanisms that articulate lexical creation, explored through the perspective of effability within a framework of successful communication in language use. A case-study approach is employed to analyse instances of lexical creation that rely on analogical processes of morphological derivation, including suffixation in English and conversion in Spanish. Additionally, the concept of social perspective is discussed in order to elucidate the complexities of linguistic decision-making when multiple lexical options are available. The lexical strategies examined in this study demonstrate the adaptability of speakers in responding to the demands of dynamic communicative contexts, thereby underscoring the pivotal role of words in shaping our understanding of the world.

Keywords: lexical creation, morphological processes, effability, language use, lexicography, lexicology

1 Introduction: Setting the context

Despite the efforts of linguists like Lyons (1968), Lewis (1970), Katz (1972), Grice (1989) or Wierzbicka (1996), effability is a vital yet often neglected concept in the realm of linguistic communication. Effability refers to the quality of being able to express oneself in words, encompassing both the ability to convey intended meaning and the art of articulating thoughts and ideas in a clear and coherent manner. Effability is a critical component of effective communication, enabling speakers to put their intended message into words and reach their communicative goals.

Moreover, effability has far-reaching implications for the broader social and cultural context in which language is used. Language plays a decisive role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy, and our understanding of the world, making it essential for speakers to express themselves effectively. The complex interplay between language, the

world and linguistic conceptualization underlines the relevance of effability in communication and stresses the need for more attention to be paid to this area.

It is common to find statements in linguistic literature claiming that words hold a profound significance for any speaker. Words are often described as having a powerful impact on our inner lives, enabling us to access new ideas, perspectives, ways of thinking and realities that exist beyond the real world, such as examples in (1):

- (1) a. *the Queen of the United States*
b. *the German victory in World War II*

Moreover, words are said to open doors to concepts that may never exist or be known, for example, cases in (2):

- (2) a. *the most distant point on Earth*
b. *the person who used language for the first time*

For many scholars, words are like the fundamental threads that, properly placed and skillfully interwoven like a warp, constitute the fabric of our thoughts. This notion has sparked intense debate among philosophers, who have engaged in extensive discussions in an effort to resolve the question of whether language serves as a necessary support for thought or merely a facilitative tool. In essence, the inquiry focuses on whether human cognition can develop independently of natural language or whether language is, in fact, an indispensable support for thought.

In our Western cultural tradition, which has its roots in the works of Aristotle, language has long been regarded as a means of communicating ideas. As a result, language is often viewed as a container into which ideas are placed in order to be transmitted to the listener, giving rise to informal statements such as the ones in (3), taken from Riemer (2010, 28, original emphasis):

- (3) a. There are a lot of ideas *in* that sentence
b. You can *get* the same meaning *across* in different ways
c. I can *put* the same *idea in* different words

Speakers use words in a largely unconscious and instinctive manner, yet simultaneously, in a highly articulate and sophisticated way. From an anthropological and ethnological perspective, there is no doubt that the ability to use language in a complex and nuanced manner is a key characteristic that sets humans apart from other living, irrational beings.

Moreover, we are deeply aware of the crucial role that words play in our daily lives, as we rely on them to communicate and interact with others, and are exposed to countless words every day. Without language, we would be lost and unable to express ourselves, as the Russian poet Mandelstam so eloquently put it: “I wanted to utter a word, but that word I cannot remember; and the bodiless thought will now return to the palace of shadows” (in Aitchison 2012, 3).

It is particularly noteworthy to focus our attention on a skill that is uniquely characteristic of human beings: language and the ability to speak. The fact that speakers of a language have mastery over the words in their language, whether they are active or passive users of this linguistic resource, is not just a matter of knowledge, but of the profound impact it has on their lives when they lack the words they need. There is a wealth of research in the language sciences that highlights the devastating effects on patients who, after suffering from strokes, brain damage or neurological disorders, experience the loss of part of their vocabulary, their mental lexicon, and are deprived of the fundamental tool they need to construct their messages and express themselves linguistically. In some cases, the aphasias that develop in patients with degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s can become so severe that those caring for these patients may no longer consider them to be a “person”, as they associate personhood with the ability to speak and communicate, to have mastery over words and to express themselves through them. This is a fascinating yet disturbing phenomenon, and one that emphasizes the critical importance of language in our lives. As the Canadian psychologist and linguist Steven Pinker, so aptly puts it:

Language is so tightly woven into human experience that it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it. Chances are that if you find two or more people together anywhere on earth, they will soon be exchanging words. When there is no one to talk with, people talk to themselves, to their dogs, even to their plants. In our social relations, the race is not to the swift but to the verbal — the spellbinding orator, the silver-tongued seducer, the persuasive child who wins the battle of wills against a brawnier parent. Aphasia, the loss of language following brain injury, is devastating, and in severe cases family members may feel that the whole person is lost forever. (Pinker 1995, 17)

Two years later, Maher and Groves (1997, 4) encapsulated this notion in a succinct and insightful statement: “Language is our humanity”. I could not agree more.

When we require a word whose existence is uncertain or unknown to us in order to develop our argument, it is often necessary to consult a

dictionary, whether a standard alphabetical dictionary or a thesaurus or conceptual one, which, in my view, is a more effective option, allowing us to locate the precise term we need in order to express our intended meaning with the exact correspondence we are seeking.

Nevertheless, it is not unusual to encounter difficulties in our searches through dictionaries when attempting to locate terms that describe very recent phenomena – words that have not yet been included in dictionaries – or when dictionaries omit words from a particular lexical category, precisely the one we require for our discourse, but include other terms from a different word class, words that are morphologically related.

The key issue is: what do speakers do when a term is required that is not listed in the dictionary, but is necessary for our discourse? Naturally, speakers tend to create it, not necessarily by borrowing from another language, but by drawing on internal, unconscious and innate mechanisms that we possess as speakers. These mechanisms often operate by analogy, but not in all cases, leading to the creation of possible / potential words that challenge linguistic norms or take on meanings different from those intended.

Although this phenomenon occurs in all languages, the following sections will look first at specific examples from English and then from Spanish. Section 2 analyses cases where the lexicon of these two languages lacks official, established forms for certain deverbal nouns, and the linguistic resources used by native speakers to fill the gap. On the other hand, section 3 develops the lexicographical and lexicological challenges posed by the irruption into the language of terms to describe a new reality that, overnight, burst into everyone's lives, forcing speakers to incorporate into their lexicon communicatively effective terms to refer to this abruptly imposed new reality.

2 Lexical creation

This section will undertake a detailed analysis of a classic example of lexical creation in English, focusing on the morphological derivation processes involved. Subsequently, the equivalent case in Spanish will be examined, exploring the alternatives offered by the derivational morphology of Spanish combined with the preconceived ideas of native speakers of Spanish in relation to the information provided by the official dictionary of the Spanish language. This comparative analysis will enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of lexical creation and the role of derivational morphology in forging the lexicon of both languages.

2.1 The case of *capsize*

First, let us examine a case of lexical creation in English, as described by Matthews (1991, 62). The starting point is the verb in (4):

(4) *to capsize*

The British linguist sought to incorporate into his discourse a morphologically-related noun with the meaning ‘action and effect of capsizing/sinking’. Upon consulting an English dictionary, he found no word with this meaning and initially considered the form in (5), although his preferred option ultimately proved to be (6):

(5) *capsization*

(6) *capsizal*

Remarkably, Matthews acknowledged that (5) was his initial choice, despite eventually opting for (6). The creation of the derivative *capsization* can be attributed to a process of analogy (analogical extension), whereby established words in the language with similar morphological patterns are identified, and the same rule of derivation (verb > noun) is applied. In this instance, the analogy is drawn from examples such as those in (7):

(7) *to stabilise > stabilisation*

to sterilise > sterilisation

to victimize > victimization

In contrast, the form in (6) is generated through the application of the morphological rule in (8a), a common means of forming derived nouns from verbs with the intended meaning of (8b):

(8) a. V + -al > N

b. ‘the act or result of [V+ -ing]’

However, upon closer examination of the relationship between the derivational affix and the base noun to which the morphological rule is applied, it can be concluded that there are statistically very few verbs in the English language that end in *-ise* and nominalize in *-al*. This scarcity of examples undermines the robustness of the analogical pattern, rendering it less reliable as a basis for morphological extension. Notably, there are some attested, albeit exceptional, examples of this rule, shown in (9):

- (9) *to revise* > *revisal* (=revision)
to despise > *despisal*
to surprise > *surprisal* (=surprise_N)

Currently, standard, monolingual dictionaries of English do not include any derived nominal forms from the verb in (4), with one notable exception. The online dictionary entry for (4), <<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/capsize>>, accessed 11 August 2024, mentions the noun in (6), a term that is explicitly acknowledged as not being found in dictionaries or encyclopaedias. This is a curious anomaly, as it suggests that the dictionary is aware of the existence of this derived nominal form, despite its absence from other lexicographic sources.

This finding showcases the shortcomings of conventional dictionary-making approaches, which often rely on corpus-based evidence and frequency of usage to determine the inclusion of words and their derivatives. In this case, the absence of (6) from standard dictionaries may be due to its relatively low frequency of use or its status as a non-standard or variant form. However, the fact that it is included in this online dictionary suggests that there may be a need for more nuanced and flexible approaches to lexicography, particularly in the digital age.

Furthermore, this example raises interesting questions about the role of dictionaries in shaping our understanding of language and the boundaries between standard and non-standard forms. As language use continues to evolve and diversify, dictionaries must adapt to reflect these changes and provide more comprehensive coverage of the language. In this context, the inclusion of the noun *capsizal* in this online dictionary may be seen as a step towards a more inclusive and dynamic methodology for lexicography.

Consequently, setting aside personal preferences and subjective biases, a more objective analysis of the evidence suggests that the noun derived from (4) is more likely to be (5). This conclusion is based on a consideration of the morphological pattern that governs the formation of derived nouns in English, as well as the analogical relationships between (4) and other verbs that undergo similar derivational processes.

It is worth noting that (5) has the status of a possible/potential word in English, rather than a fully established one. This means that, despite its morphological plausibility, it is not yet included in the official lexicon of the English language. In other words, *capsization* is a word that possesses a high degree of semantic transparency and morphological regularity, making it a potential candidate for use in English that would be readily understood by speakers without difficulty. However, despite its linguistic plausibility, *capsization* has not yet achieved widespread acceptance or recognition as a standard term in the English language, and its status

remains that of a potential or possible word. This distinction is important, as it brings to the forefront the complex and dynamic nature of language use and lexicalization: while *capsization* may not be a fully established word in English, it is still a possible word that could be used in certain contexts or by any speaker. This raises thought-provoking questions about the boundaries between potential and actual words, and the role of linguistic and social factors in shaping the lexicon of a language in the context of lexical creation.

2.2 The case of *zozobrar*

Having examined the English example, we shall now proceed to investigate its Spanish counterpart, maintaining our focus on the question of lexical creation. The Spanish equivalents of (4) above are *zozobrar* or *hundirse*, both of which convey the meaning of ‘to capsize’ or ‘to sink’. As a starting point for our analysis, we shall take the verb *zozobrar* (‘to capsize’) in (10) and explore the corresponding derived nominal form that would convey the meaning ‘act or result of capsizing’, with a view to comparing it to the English example and identifying any similarities or differences that may arise.

(10) *zozobrar* (‘to capsize’)

When we solicited the opinions of native speakers of Spanish regarding the derived nominal form of (10), the majority of respondents provided the noun in (11) as their preferred answer. This was followed by other, less frequent, alternatives such as those in (12), which, as can be observed, employ suffixes that are commonly used to nominalize verbs in Spanish, namely ‘-miento’, ‘-aje’, and ‘-(a)ción’. These suffixes are very productive in Spanish and are often used to form nouns that denote the action or result of the meaning of the verb, as illustrated in examples in (13):

(11) *zozobramiento*

(12) *zozobraje*

zozobración

- (13) a. *-miento*: as in *encantamiento* (‘enchantment’) < *encantar* (‘to enchant’)
rozamiento (‘rubbing’) < *rozar* (‘to rub’)
- b. *-aje*: as in *abordaje* (‘boarding’) < *abordar* (‘to board’)
doblaje (‘dubbing’) < *doblar* (‘to dub’)
- c. *-(a)ción*: as in *celebración* (‘celebration’) < *celebrar* (‘to celebrate’)
oración (‘prayer’) < *orar* (‘to pray’)

The use of these suffixes to form derived nominals is a common pattern in Spanish, and it is interesting to note that the majority of native speakers opted for the suffix ‘-miento’ to form the noun in (11). This suggests that the suffix ‘-miento’ is a more productive and preferred option for forming derived nominals in Spanish, at least in this particular context.

It should be underlined that the derived nominal form in (11) may be influenced by analogical regularisation with the derived nominal form of *hundir* (‘to sink’), a synonym of *zozobrar*. Specifically, the pattern of *hundir* (‘to sink’) > *hundimiento* (‘sinking’) could be applied to *zozobrar* (‘to capsiz’) > *zozobramiento* (‘capsization’) by analogy. This possibility is certainly plausible, and it is tempting to consider it as a viable option. However, a closer examination of the data reveals that this is not the only possible outcome. For instance, the verb *celebrar* (‘to celebrate’) in (13c), which ends in ‘-brar’ like *zozobrar*, nominalizes as *celebración* (‘celebration’), whereas the nominalization *zozobración* is, as previously noted, rarely chosen as a spontaneous option by native speakers of Spanish. This suggests that the relationship between the verb and its derived nominal form is more complex and multifaceted than a simple analogical regularisation, and that further factors may be at play in shaping the morphology of the derived nominal.

Let us next check the *Dictionary of the Spanish Language (DLE–Diccionario de la lengua española)* to gain insight into this matter. As can be observed in (14), the *DLE* lists the noun *zozobra*, and its primary meaning is precisely the one we are interested in: ‘acción y efecto de zozobrar’ (‘act or result of capsizing’) <<https://dle.rae.es/zozobra>>, accessed 11 August 2024.

(14) *zozobra*

1. fem. Acción y efecto de zozobrar (‘act or result of capsizing’).
2. fem. Inquietud, aflicción y congoja de ánimo, que no deja sosegar, o por el riesgo que amenaza, o por el mal que ya se padece (‘uneasiness, distress and anguish of spirit that affords no respite, either because of the threat of impending danger or the suffering that is already being experienced’).

However, it should be observed that, in my experience as a native speaker of Spanish, as well as in the experience of many others, the Spanish noun *zozobra* is more commonly associated with the second meaning in the dictionary, ‘uneasiness, distress and anguish of spirit that affords no respite’. In examining the discrepancy between the semantic information found in the *DLE*, the arrangement of meanings, and the everyday usage of a word, we encounter the intricate nuances inherent in

language. This divergence underscores the many-sided nature of meaning, which can vary significantly across different speakers and contextual settings.

The lexemes *zozobrar*_V and *zozobra*_N exhibit a clear morphological relationship, with the verb serving as the base form and the noun, derived from it (V > N). In linguistic theory this connection is categorized as a case of conversion or zero derivation (Plag 2018, 11). In this non-concatenative process, no visible suffix is appended to mark the derivation. Specifically in Spanish, the inflectional ending corresponding to the first conjugation of the base verb (‘-ar’) is replaced by the grammatical marker for gender in the derived noun (in this example, the feminine marker ‘-a’). Similar instances of conversion are not uncommon in the Spanish language (Amador Rodríguez 2009, 35). The analyses are presented in (15):

- (15) *zozobrar* (‘to capsize’) > *zozobra* (‘capsizing’)
zozobr- + *-a* (bound root + gender marker: fem.)
asombrar (‘to astonish’) > *asombro* (‘astonishment’)
asombr- + *-o* (bound root + gender marker: masc.)
cobrar (‘to charge’) > *cobro* (‘charge’)
cobr- + *-o* (bound root + gender marker: masc.)

Phrases such as *la zozobra del barco* (‘the capsizing of the ship’) are linguistically accurate and absolutely correct, and denote the specific event of the sinking of a vessel, as examples in (16) show:

- (16) *La vía de agua que se abrió en el casco causó la zozobra del barco*
 (‘the water leak in the hull caused the capsizing of the ship’)
...fueron testigos de la zozobra del barco de pesca
 (‘...witnessed the capsizing of the fishing boat’)

As a native speaker of Spanish, I must confess that I have often found myself uncertain about the correctness of using the term *zozobra* to convey the meaning ‘act or result of capsizing’, despite its explicit validation by authoritative dictionaries. This hesitation stems from a lingering doubt about the word’s semantic precision, which, in turn, prompts me to opt for the alternative synonym *hundimiento* (‘sinking’). My preference for the latter term is rooted in a higher degree of confidence in its accuracy and a more intuitive sense of its connotations, which I believe are more closely aligned with the intended meaning. This personal anecdote highlights the complexities of linguistic decision-making, even among native speakers; it

also suggests that there is a need to think more carefully about how words, meanings and situations interact in language use.

Considerations of this nature have been a central focus of research in linguistic theory. Mark Aronoff makes reference to what he describes as the social perspective. Aronoff (1976) introduced the concept of social perspective in order to explore how language choices are influenced by social factors. This idea emphasizes that, when native speakers select words, they are not just considering the semantic (literal) meaning or grammatical correctness; they are also taking into account the social implications of their choices.

Aronoff posited that language is deeply embedded in social contexts. When speakers select a word, they often consider how that word will be perceived by others taking into account factors like formality, politeness and the social standing of both the speaker and the listener. Because language is a key factor in establishing the identity of an individual, the choices speakers make can reveal aspects of their social identity and how they wish to be perceived by others. The social perspective entails the desire for correctness: the desire to be correct refers to a speaker's motivation to use language that is consistent with social norms and expectations. This means that speakers may refrain from using certain words or phrases that could be deemed inappropriate or incorrect in a given social setting, even if those expressions are technically accurate. Aronoff's social perspective also spotlights how different social groups may have distinct linguistic preferences. For example, a word that is perfectly acceptable in one community might be disapproved of in another. Such variations can be influenced by variables such as age, education, region, and social class. Inevitably, the social perspective links with pragmatics in that it involves the study of how context influences meaning; speakers must navigate not just the literal meanings of words but also their connotations and the social dynamics at play in a specific context of use.

As a result, Aronoff's concept of social perspective shows that word choice is not merely a linguistic decision but also a social one; this approach helps us understand the complexities of communication and the ways in which language reflects and shapes social relationships. Aronoff (1976, 42) claims that "[i]n order to avoid the stigma of using the wrong word, [the speaker] falls back on the trusty [word], where he knows that though he is surely revealing the paucity of his vocabulary, he cannot make a mistake".

In my experience, the term *zozobra* is inextricably linked with the meanings of 'uneasiness' and 'concern'. Additionally, the derived nominal

zozobramiento strikes me as somewhat anomalous and its usage in Spanish appears unnatural to me. Consequently, I eventually opt for the more conventional, familiar and reliable term *hundimiento* ('sinking') as a safer alternative.

3 When effability puts lexicography and lexicology on the ropes

This section builds on the processes of lexical creation discussed in the previous section, which showed the mechanisms that native speakers use in order to innovate and adapt their language in response to specific contextual demands. Here, the focus is shifted to the lexicographic and lexicological implications of a sudden and significant external reality that has had an impact upon the lives of all of us, actually. The emergence of novel phenomena, such as the recent outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has presented a distinctive challenge for language users in terms of finding suitable linguistic expressions to refer to the new reality. This section examines the ways in which speakers of English and Spanish have responded to this challenge, drawing upon their linguistic resources to create new words, phrases, and expressions that convey the intended meaning and facilitate successful communication.

From a lexicographical perspective, we will analyse the ways in which dictionaries have incorporated into the lexicon of both languages the basic vocabulary related to the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19), exploring the various forms this vocabulary has taken and the contexts in which it has come to be used. Furthermore, this section will also examine the linguistic features that have emerged in response to the pandemic, such as the use of analogies and other figurative language devices to convey the complexity and uncertainty of the situation. From a lexicological perspective, the semantic changes and extensions that have occurred in English and Spanish will be discussed, too.

It is important not to lose sight of effability, that is, the ability to express oneself accurately and effectively in language. This capacity for clear and precise expression is crucial for successful communication, and keeping it is a key consideration in the study of language use, especially when analysing the adaptive nature of language use in response to emergent events and highlighting the importance of linguistic agility in the face of rapidly changing circumstances.

3.1 Covid: A virus and a disease

The pandemic disease that emerged in the early 2020s has been referred to by a range of terms in English, as evidenced by the lexical entry for the acronym *Covid* in the online version of the *English Dictionary – Cambridge Dictionary* <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/covid-19?q=Covid>>, accessed 13 August 2024. The variants listed include the ones in (17), demonstrating the flexibility and variability of the term in common usage:

- (17) *Covid-19*
COVID-19
Covid
COVID

The English terms for the pandemic exhibit a significant degree of orthographic flexibility, allowing for both uppercase and lowercase spellings, as well as the optional inclusion of the numerical marker ‘-19’. The latter specifically references the year 2019, when the virus strain responsible for the pandemic was first identified.

It should be noted that, while the etymology of the term is not provided in the dictionary entry, examples are given to illustrate its combinatorial potential in referring to the disease condition. These examples include the phrases in (18), which demonstrate the term’s capacity for modification and extension:

- (18) *to have Covid*
to get Covid
to be infected with Covid
to be sick with Covid
to die of Covid

In contrast to the English language, the Spanish language presents a lexicographical and lexicological landscape that is considerable more complex and unstable. The terminology related to the pandemic has not yet stabilized, and a definitive and widely accepted vocabulary has not been established. This is evident, as will be seen below, in the varied and often conflicting uses of terms, as well as the lack of standardization in spelling, formatting and usage.

In Spanish, Covid-19 was known simply as *coronavirus* in the early days of the pandemic in 2020. The original term *coronavirus* was soon replaced in the official bureaucracy by the more technical *SARS CoV-2*

(the official name of the virus: the acronym from *severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2*), simplified as *COVID-19* (written in capital letters and expressed in the masculine gender: *el COVID-19*). Some official bulletins occasionally used the compound expression *la enfermedad COVID-19* ('the Covid-19 disease'), although the expression *el COVID-19* remained in general use.

Therefore, the start of the phenomenon in the Spanish language included the variety of expressions listed in (19):

- (19) *coronavirus*
SARS CoV-2
COVID-19
el COVID-19
la enfermedad COVID-19

The acronym *COVID*, which refers to the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is remarkable for incorporating the letter 'D', denoting 'disease' (*enfermedad* in Spanish, which is feminine in gender). This etymological feature, which can be traced back to the compound *coronavirus disease 2019*, has implications for the grammatical gender of the term in Spanish. Specifically, the use of the feminine grammatical gender is preferred when referring to the disease, as evidenced by the obligatory use of the feminine article *la* in example (20) and the variability in usage in examples such as (21), where the reference is either to the virus (21a, masculine article) or to the disease (21b, feminine article):

- (20) *La COVID-19 sumó seis nuevas víctimas*
 'COVID-19 disease added six new casualties'
- (21) a. *El COVID-19 podría extenderse a 50 países*
 'COVID-19 virus could be extended to 50 countries'
- b. *La COVID-19 podría extenderse a 50 países*
 'COVID-19 disease could be extended to 50 countries'

Due to the novelty of the phenomenon, the *DLE* (*Dictionary of the Spanish language*), the authoritative reference for the Spanish language, offers limited lexicographic information about *Covid*. A search of the dictionary (<<https://dle.rae.es/covid>>, accessed 14 August 2024) reveals that the term *COVID* is included, albeit with limited information. As can be seen in (22), the word is written in capital letters and is recognized as an acronym borrowed from English. Mind that the dictionary assigns both masculine and feminine grammatical gender to the word in Spanish, reflecting the complexity and variability of language use in this context.

(22) *COVID*

Del ingl. *COVID*, y este acrón. de *coronavirus disease* ‘enfermedad del coronavirus’

(‘from English *COVID*, and this acronym from *coronavirus disease*’)

1. masc. fem. *Med.* Síndrome respiratorio agudo producido por un coronavirus (‘acute respiratory syndrome caused by a coronavirus’)

The *DLE* defines *COVID* as ‘síndrome respiratorio agudo producido por un coronavirus’ (‘acute respiratory syndrome caused by a coronavirus’), thus focusing on the medical traits of the pandemic. However, this definition does not capture the full range of meanings and connotations associated with the term, which have evolved rapidly in response to the pandemic. The dictionary’s recognition of both masculine and feminine grammatical gender for *COVID* together with the limited information given underlines the challenges of documenting and codifying language use in real time.

To complicate matters further, it is important to consider the pronunciation of the word *COVID* in Spanish. While the initial pronunciation seems to follow an oxytone stress pattern (/ko'βid/), a variant spelling with an acute accent on the ‘o’ (*CÓVID*) has emerged, leading to a paroxytone stress pattern (/ˈkoβid/). This development is consistent with the phonological patterns of the Spanish language, where bisyllabic words typically exhibit a paroxytone stress pattern. The assimilation of the new word *CÓVID* into this prosodic pattern is a predictable outcome of language contact and change, where new words become integrated into the existing phonological and prosodic structures of the language.

3.2 Someone who has Covid

It is reasonable to assume that, when a virus emerges that causes a disease in a population, the language of that community of speakers will naturally incorporate a term into its lexicon that designates an individual infected by the virus, specifically a person who suffers from or is affected by the disease. This is a common linguistic phenomenon, where the language adapts to reflect the changing needs and experiences of its speakers. In this case, the term would serve as a way to identify and refer to individuals who have contracted the disease, facilitating communication and discourse about the disease and its impact on the community.

The incorporation of such a term into the lexicon would also reflect the social and cultural context in which the disease is experienced. The term would likely be shaped by the community’s understanding of the disease,

its causes, symptoms, and consequences, as well as the social and cultural norms surrounding illness and disease. For example, the term might convey a sense of stigma or shame associated with contracting the disease, or it might be used to express empathy or solidarity with those affected.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the absence of a widely accepted term in English to designate an individual infected by the virus is conspicuous. At the lexicographical level, to date, no single word has been identified that specifically denotes ‘a person sick with Covid’. If this meaning is to be expressed, the only recourse for speakers is to use one of the collocations included in (18) above. For the time being, speakers have to make a lexical detour, which is shocking when they realise that the English vocabulary does have specific terms, usually derived nouns, to refer to the individual that suffers from a particular disease. Consider the following examples:

- (23) an *asthmatic* is ‘someone who suffers from asthma’
 a *diabetic* is ‘someone who suffers from diabetes’
 a *leper* is ‘someone who has leprosy’
 a *paranoid* is ‘someone affected with paranoia’

These English lexemes have equivalent words in Spanish:

- (24) *asmático, diabético, leproso, paranoico*

As we have just seen, in Spanish we find in everyday language specific lexemes that designate people suffering from a given disease. Although this may seem like a positive picture, the truth is that languages, in general, lack regular terms to refer to individuals suffering from certain diseases. The lexical gaps in this respect are enormous. It is interesting to note that languages do not usually have large numbers of lexemes to refer to a person affected by a given ailment (not even for the most frequent, common or usual illnesses), nor do they have stable or systematic morphological rules that allow new lexemes to be generated with confidence. In the absence of established lexemes in the language, for expressions of this kind we move in the realm of potential/possible words for expressions with the intended meaning ‘someone sick with / affected by X’, where X stands for the name of the disease.

There are many diseases for which the Spanish language lacks a term that refers to the person who suffers from them; this is the case of ailments like those in (25), to mention a few of them:

- (25) *lumbago* ('lower back pain')
catarro or *resfriado* ('cold')
sarampión ('measles')
tortícolis ('stiff neck')

To refer to those individuals who suffer from any of these diseases, the Spanish language resorts to similar mechanisms to those used in English, having to use expressions such as *una persona acatarrada o resfriada* ('a person with a cold'), *alguien con lumbago* ('someone who suffers from lower back pain'), *alguien que tiene sarampión* ('someone who has measles'), or *alguien que padece tortícolis* ('someone who suffers from a stiff neck').

The situation that arises in the Spanish lexicon to refer to the person who has Covid is particularly striking. The average native speaker of Spanish uses a detour, a phrase, to express this meaning, something similar to the English examples given in (18) above: *tiene COVID* ('X has Covid'), *está enfermo de COVID* ('X is sick with Covid'), and the like. However, the *Historical dictionary of the Spanish language* (DHLE–*Diccionario histórico de la lengua española*) does include in its electronic version the lexeme *covidico* (a derived nominal) with the meaning 'a person who has covid' and documents two examples of usage in peninsular Spanish from journalistic sources dating from 2020 (<<https://www.rae.es/dhle/covidico>>, accessed 14 August 2024).

Be that as it may, the word *covidico* is not part of the active vocabulary of native speakers of Spanish (active vocabulary in the sense initially discussed by Corder 1967 and later elaborated within morphological theory by Aronoff 1976). Even though the disease is still hitting the world, I think it will be a long time before the Spanish language records a regular, frequent, spontaneous use of the word to designate the Covid patient, if ever it does. For now, the lexeme is not established at all, it is not included in the latest digital edition of the *Dictionary of the Spanish language* (DLE), so it can only be concluded that the morphological creation *covidico* remains a potential/possible word in Spanish. In English, an equivalent term simply does not exist.

4 Conclusion

This article has explored the ability of native speakers to expand their lexical repertoire in response to novel communicative situations, where existing terms are insufficient to linguistically encode reality. Drawing on the concept of effability, which encompasses the art of articulating one's intended meaning with precision in effective communication, and the

fundamental notion that words are essential for human conceptualisation of reality, this study has examined instances of lexical creation in English and Spanish.

Our analysis has focused on cases where morphological derivation, based on the phenomenon of analogy, is employed as a key resource for lexical innovation, leveraging established patterns of word formation in each language. The case of the verb *to capsize* has been considered, highlighting the absence of a corresponding noun in standard dictionaries. Attempts to create a new derived nominal have been discussed, and the processes of analogy that influence the derivation of *capsization* and *capsizal* have been thoroughly examined. The study has outlined how established morphological patterns in English back up the creation of new words, noting the scarcity of certain terms, thus complicating the reliability of this derivational approach. The inclusion of the derived nominal *capsizal* in an online dictionary, despite its absence from standard dictionaries, has raised questions about lexicographic practices and the need for more flexible approaches in the digital age.

The study has then moved on to analyse the Spanish counterpart, *zozobrar*, explored the derived nominal forms preferred by native speakers and compared them to the English examples, noting the use of common Spanish suffixes for nominalization purposes. The linguistic arguments used have included seminal ideas by Mark Aronoff, in particular, the concept of social perspective, emphasizing that language choices are influenced not only by semantic meaning but also by social factors, which can lead to indecision in word usage among native speakers. The article has addressed reflections regarding language choices, illustrating the complexities and nuances involved in lexical decision-making.

This research has also delved into the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 virus on the vocabulary of English and Spanish speakers, zooming in on the challenges posed by the emergence of a new disease and the need for linguistic innovation. While the study has revealed the absence of a widely accepted term in English to denote an individual infected with Covid, underscoring the existence of a lexical gap that speakers must navigate using various collocations, the research has also shed light on the evolution of Covid-19 terminology in Spanish, particularly with regard to the complex role of grammatical gender in Spanish examples.

From a lexicographical perspective, the study has foregrounded the limitations of dictionaries in providing comprehensive information on the pandemic-related vocabulary, as well as the ongoing instability and lack of standardization in this area. The contrastive analysis of English and Spanish has accounted for the flexibility of English terms, permitting

variations in spelling and usage, in contrast to the more rigid structures observed in Spanish words. This finding suggests that the terminology under analysis is still in a state of flux, with no definitive vocabulary established, reflecting the dynamic nature of language.

In summary, this cross-linguistic study has demonstrated the way speakers of both languages have innovated and adapted their language to generate new words and expressions in response to specific needs, thus showcasing linguistic creativity and stressing the importance of linguistic agility in the interest of true effective communication.

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(METAPHORICAL) SIZE, SHAPE, AND ARRANGEMENT CLASSIFIERS IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN

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Abstract: The present paper investigates classifier N1s in classifier + of + noun sequences of the type *a drop of blood*, focusing on classifiers referring to size, shape, and arrangement. In doing so, the paper has a two-fold aim. Firstly, it proposes a novel classification of classifier N1s in Romanian; secondly, starting from two intuitions: (a) both nominal elements in the classifier structure are ‘choosy’, i.e. classifiers are not interchangeable; (b) novel combinations of classifiers and ‘classifees’, i.e. nominal elements in a classifier construction that would not usually collocate, take on evaluating tinges, the paper proposes that classifiers are implicated in a gliding movement along a quantifier – qualifier continuum.

Keywords: classifiers, size, shape, arrangement

1 Introduction

Building on existing classifications of classifiers (Allan 1977 for English, Lehrer 1985 for English, Vos 1999 for Dutch, Stavrou 2003 for Greek), the paper proposes a classification of Romanian classifiers that takes into account the meaning of both nominal elements in the classifier construction.

The classes of classifiers the paper proposes are: venery terms (*roi de albine* ‘swarm of bees’), shape classifiers (*căpățână de varză* ‘head of cabbage’), unit classifiers (*un element de echipament* ‘a piece of equipment’), arrangement / size classifiers (*o grămadă de moloz* ‘a heap of debris’), measure classifiers (*un kilogram de cartofi* ‘a kilo of potatoes’).

Secondly, the paper proposes that classifiers migrate along a quantifier-qualifier continuum. For example, the classifier *cireadă* ‘herd’ collocates with ‘cattle’; however, in a novel combination like *o cireadă de*