
Linguistic and extralinguistic determinants in attitudes towards grammatical creativity/productivity

Anouk Van den Stock¹, Anne-Sophie Ghyselen¹ & Timothy Coleman¹

¹*Universiteit Gent*

name.surname@ugent.be

According to Leech (1969: 24), speakers are creative when they make “original use of the established possibilities of the language”. This definition relates closely to the concept of productivity – i.e., a construction’s ability to be extended to license novel instantiations (Hoffmann 2018, see also Goldberg 2019). Current research into productivity is often corpus-based and focuses on construction-internal measures. However, little is known about which characteristics of the *language user* influence their verbal creativity, though recent studies in usage-based grammar show the significance of individual differences in linguistic knowledge. Consequently, we can expect variation in the extent to which language users will (i) extend constructions creatively, and (ii) accept creative extensions produced by other speakers. The present study applies a cognitive sociolinguistic approach in a first attempt to investigate which user-related variables affect language users’ attitudes towards syntactic creativity/productivity and how these intertwine with linguistic determinants such as the ones mentioned above.

More than 700 native speakers of Dutch participated in an online acceptability rating experiment in which they evaluated both conventional and unconventional/productive/creative instantiations of two selected Dutch argument structure patterns, namely the *weg*-pattern in (1) and the *krijgen*-passive in (2), on a 7-point Likert scale.

- (1) Hij baande/zocht/toeterde/elleboogde zich een weg door de menigte.
'He made/searched/honked/elbowed his way through the crowd.'
- (2) Els kreeg een kaartje aangeboden/opgeplakt/geleverd/toevertrouwd.
'Els was presented/stuck on/delivered/entrusted a card' (lit. 'E. got the card presented/...')

Our first results indicate that there is considerable individual variation in speakers’ evaluation of the less conventional instantiations of these constructions. In our presentation, we will analyse this variation using mixed ordinal regression models, exploring the interplay of linguistic determinants on the one hand – such as token frequency, lemma frequency and semantic compatibility – and extralinguistic/user-related determinants on the other hand – such as age, level of education, gender, personality (measured by the BFI-2) and general intelligence.

References: • Goldberg, A. (2019). *Explain me this. Creativity, Competition, and the Partial Productivity of Constructions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. • Hoffmann, T. (2018). *Creativity and construction grammar: Cognitive and psychological issues*. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 66(3), 259-276. • Leech, G.N. (1969). *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. London and New York: Longman.