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Metonymy and the Creation of New Words in Hupa*

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All languages create new words constantly, via such processes as semantic shifts and borrowings. In the case of semantic shift, a language extends the meanings of words which already exist in the lexicon. This allows the language to cover new meanings without creating new words. In the case of borrowing, a language utilizes words from the lexicons of other languages. Typically, these words are borrowed when a particular cultural item or concept is borrowed as well, or when the speakers of the borrowing language come into contact with a natural phenomenon for which they have no name, but which does have a name in another language. It is also possible for a language to simply create a new word altogether. Each language has its own particular set of rules for creating words in this way. Thus the process of coinage, and the rules within each language for coining new lexical items, is one of the places in which unique aspects of a language can be found.

In this study, I will show that languages do not only have certain preferred formal structures for creating new words, but that they have certain preferred conceptual structures, as well. In other words, we expect that when a language creates new words through the process of coinage, it will have particular grammatical rules for doing so. Perhaps the language uses certain verb formations in creating new words, or it may use nouns plus a particular particle. In any case, it is possible to study a language and to gain some sense of the ways in which that language creates new words. I will show that languages do not simply have these formal, grammatical, rules for forming new words, but that they have particular preferred cognitive structures as well. This means that certain ways of looking at the world, of categorizing the world, are preferred by language speakers, and are used by them in the creation of new lexical items. Looking at this phenomenon can lead us in interesting directions in cognitive linguistics.

This is a study of the creation of new words in Hupa, an Athapaskan language spoken in Northern California. I have chosen to work with Hupa due to the fact that, like many other Native Californian languages, there has been an influx of new words in the last hundred years or so. This makes it easier to study the processes by which new words are created, since there are so many which are being created in the present time, and to see any trends which may exist in the creation of words in general. It would, of course, be possible to study this phenomenon in any language, as all languages use (among other processes) coinage to create new words. However, I believe that this recent influx of new words in Hupa presents a researcher with the opportunity to investigate both traditional forms of coinage, and to study whether those forms are those which are being used today, at a time when there is a flood of new vocabulary being added to the language. If there is indeed a pattern in the coinage of new nouns, it can be examined by comparing traditional forms of noun creation with the ways in which nouns are created at the present time.

To begin, it is important to understand the historical reasons for this influx of new lexical items. The history of Hupa language loss parallels the history of many other tribes in California. To quote Leanne Hinton, "after decades of social change, and of attempts by authorities to eradicate native language use, Native

California languages are spoken only by a few elders" (Hinton 1994:14). The process which led to this outcome, and the result itself, mean that the languages of California are not spoken every day, and in fact are often used only in particular, ritualized contexts, or for only a small part of a conversation, such as the greeting or parting phrases. Thus, "new words stopped being incorporated into many California languages when they ceased to be languages of daily communication" (Hinton 1995:38). However, even when a language is still used as the language of daily communication, it is possible for the language to stop creating new words. This could be due to several reasons. First, it is possible that when the topic of conversation centered around something for which Hupa had no words, the language of conversation switched to English. This topic-activated code-switching would alleviate the need for the creation of new words for these subjects. It is also possible that Hupa speakers simply used the English words that they needed, inserting them into the middle of conversations which were otherwise in Hupa. However, these words were not permanently borrowed into Hupa. In either case, the result is the same — Hupa, like many languages, therefore lacks some vocabulary in these areas, and is currently creating new words to use in situations such as these.

There are several reasons why the possible strategies which I mentioned above are no longer acceptable to speakers and learners of Hupa. To begin with, the language is undergoing a revitalization process, meaning that there is an increased interest in using the language for more than just ceremonial purposes. Hupa has had two teams involved in the California Master-Apprentice Program, an intensive language learning program run by the Native California Network, in which a fluent speaker of Hupa works in close contact with an apprentice to teach her or him to speak Hupa. It also has a summer immersion camp, in which many families participate, learning Hupa words and phrases which they can use in everyday contexts. There is a school program, and many of the tribal elders meet weekly. And finally, there are people meeting with speakers of Hupa throughout the tribe, in order to learn the language. In most of these situations, one of the main goals is to use Hupa as the language of everyday communication. Communication in the present time deals with topics very different from those in traditional life, and therefore demands the modernization of the lexicon.

It would be possible for these words to be borrowed from English. I mentioned above that borrowing is a frequently used process when a new item or concept has to be named. However, speakers of languages like Hupa are working to restore those languages in the face of English encroachment, rendering the borrowing of English terminology an undesirable option. Also, there is a feeling that language and culture are closely related, and that maintaining traditional forms of word creation helps to maintain important cultural ties. This sense of the identity between languages and other aspects of culture is strong among many Native American tribes, and goes as far back as the 1700's, as can be seen in this quote by a member of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, who said,

Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language

imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors. (Rawls 1984:3)

In this speaker's view, language is placed on a par with the other cultural skills mentioned. Language is one of the skills which a culturally adept member of a community must possess. Non-fluency in their native language is considered to be an important reason as to why these young people were no longer considered by other members of their communities to be fit leaders. We see here a strong correlation between language and culture. Thus, the encroachment of English could be seen as a threat not only to Native languages, but to Native culture, as well. The use of English borrowings thus becomes a sign of cultural decay. Therefore, in spite of the fact that borrowing is, in fact, a common process throughout the world's languages, the borrowing of English words into languages like Hupa is generally dispreferred as a strategy.

Unlike borrowing, coinage is a way to bring new words into a language utilizing resources within the language itself. For example, it is possible to use a language's metaphor system to create new phrases or words which can be used to talk about a novel situation. This strategy systematically connects a concrete domain to a more abstract domain, allowing the users of the language to understand the abstract domain in terms of the concrete domain (Lakoff 1980). While languages do have many metaphors in common, due to the fact that metaphors are often based on bodily experiences common to all human beings, languages also have their own particular metaphors, or their own particular way of instantiating a given metaphor. For example, Hupa, like English, has the metaphor A RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY. However, while the English metaphor typically focuses on automobiles and ships as a means of transport ("they're spinning their wheels", "their relationship is on the rocks"), Hupa focuses on walking ("they're walking together" meaning "they're married"). Thus, it would be possible for Hupa to use this metaphor to name such a concept as divorce, utilizing a word which means that the people in question are no longer walking together. Using metaphors which already exist in a language to create new words can therefore be one way of retaining ties to older linguistic and cultural traditions (Ahlers n.d.). However, as the creation of new words via cognitive metaphor does not appear to be a common strategy in Hupa, I will not be discussing it in detail here.

Hupa does use image metaphors (IM), though, in which the name of an object evokes a particular image which can be mapped onto the object, giving the hearer an understanding of what the object looks like. These metaphors are not systematic in the way that cognitive metaphors are, in that they are typically used once, for one object, and not extended or used in reasoning (Lakoff 1980). I am distinguishing these uses of image metaphor from nouns in Hupa which are formed by pointing out the resemblance (R) between two things (for example, below, the word for 'beans' which means 'pine nuts-they resemble').

The process of metonymy (M) is also used to coin new words. In this process, the name of one part of an object can be used to stand for the whole object, or the name of the entire object could be used to stand for a part of the object. In the use of metonymy, it is always a salient feature which is chosen to name the whole. This too can lead to interesting cultural insights, in that it can point to what is considered salient by the speakers of a particular language. It is also possible to utilize a particular kind of frame metonymy. In this case, a part of a frame is used to stand for the entire frame, and then for a salient object in that frame. This

essentially allows one member of a frame to be used to name another member of the frame. All of these processes make use of a language's particular formal structure.

But what is interesting about the addition of new items to a language's lexicon, is that languages appear to have preferences for certain of these processes. These preferences are not just for particular formal structures, by which I mean that morphological structure which is used to create new forms, but for certain cognitive structures, as well. Hupa appears to prefer to use the process of coinage through "frame metonymy", a process which I mentioned above. In this case, Hupa particularly focuses on metonymy within an associated action frame (AAF). I am following Charles Fillmore in understanding a frame to mean the canonical, pre-packaged cognitive representation of a type of event relative to which a lexical item is understood and defined (Fillmore 1982). Frames such as these typically involve cultural knowledge about a particular situation or social interaction. Thus, the creation of new words in this way can also take into account cultural information. For example, the English verbs "buy" and "sell" label particular sub-events within the commercial transaction frame, and each evokes the frame as a whole in being understood. Neither of these terms can be adequately defined without referring to the other, and without referring to a cultural context of mercantilism. In this paper, I am using "action frame" to mean the frame within which an action is situated. Thus, the process of metonymy allows one aspect of such a frame to be used to stand for a salient object in that frame. This is the process which is used more frequently than any other in the creation of words in Hupa.

I will now present some of the many examples of these processes at work in older Hupa lexical items. This demonstrates that these processes have been at work in Hupa for quite some time, and are not just recent additions to the language. These examples can be seen below. Here I am using AAF to mean associated action frame, IM to mean image metaphor, M to stand for metonymy, and R to mean resemblance. These items are taken from the second draft edition of the Hupa Language Dictionary. A brief note on the transcription conventions which I am using: a capital L is a voiceless lateral fricative, an apostrophe is a glottal stop, the letters wh are pronounced [hw], and a colon indicates a long vowel. In each case, salient morpheme boundaries are indicated by dashes, and the same morpheme breaks are indicated by dashes in the glosses.

The first example which I would like to discuss is a case of metonymy (M). The name for *angelica* is taken from one of its salient features — namely its prolific roots. Thus, a feature which is an important part of the object is used to name the object.

mixa:che'e'-xole:n

'angelica' (its roots-there are plenty) (M)

The next two cases are image metaphors (IM). These examples, 'ankle' and 'arm', are both named based on an image of what ankles and arms look like.

whi-qe:-jiwol'

'(my) ankle' (my leg-ball) (IM)

whiky'a:ng'ay

'arm' (it extends away from me) (IM)

The rest of the examples are all named after salient actions which are performed with the objects in question (this is associated action frame metonymy) (AAF). For instance, a bat is named after a salient action which it performs, namely flying around at night. And the word for barbeque refers to the action of sticking, for example, salmon steaks on sticks pointed towards the roasting fire. The case of 'acorn' is more complex than the others. As with the rest of the objects in this list, it is named after a salient action performed with acorns, that is, eating them.

However, it is important to note that there is another metonymy taking place here — acorns are being chosen as a salient form of food. There are other kinds of food which can be eaten, and which therefore should be able to be named using the collocation ‘what someone eats’, but acorns are the most salient food item, and therefore bear that name. This is a case in which the choice of which item to name with this phrase indicates a fact about the culture which uses the language, namely that acorns are a staple food. This can also be seen in the word for ‘boat’, which means ‘in it-they travel’. This indicates that boats are a salient means of travel.

dahch'iwile:l	‘arrows’ (he holds them up) (AAF)
k'iwinya'n	‘acorn’ (what someone eats) (AAF)
t'anq'-ts'isday	‘acorn camp’ (in the fall-she stays there) (AAF)
xang'-ch'ing'-k'iniLnoy	‘barbeque’ (fire-towards-somebody sticks things up) (AAF)
xatL'e'-na:mat'	‘bat’ (at night-it flaps around) (AAF)
me'dil (< me'-na'dil)	‘boat/canoe’ (in it-they travel) (AAF)

Associated action frame metonymy appears to be the most frequent way of naming lexical items. In Hupa, there exist some 300 root nouns (these are nouns which are unanalyzable). A majority of the rest of the nouns in the language are created using the formal process seen in the examples above (the third person singular present of verbs — this will be discussed below). And of these, it would appear that most focus on metonymy via an associated action frame. Although this process of noun formation is common to all of the Pacific Coast Athapaskan (PCA) languages, Hupa appears to utilize it more often than any of the others, even replacing a relatively large number of the root nouns which are inherited from proto-Athapaskan into the other PCA languages.

Examples such as these show that this process has been productive in Hupa for quite some time, as these are all older cultural items. Thus, this process exists as a model for the formation of new words. It is well known that productivity is defined as analogy with pre-existing forms. In English, the creation of noun-noun compounds serves much the same function as the processes which I am discussing. Mary Ellen Ryder, in discussing English noun-noun compounding, states that

new forms are produced based on analogy with existing conventional expressions. That is, once a pattern begins, the more established forms there are in that pattern, the more likely it is that a new form will be based on one or more of those forms, or on a slightly more abstract template based on them. (Ryder 1994, 253)

This seems to be as true for conceptual patterns as it is for formal patterns. In other words, a language can not only prefer to use, for example, a third person singular present verb in its creation of new nouns, but it can also prefer to use one of the conceptual strategies which I mentioned above — metonymy, for instance. Thus, the fact that associated action frame metonymy has been used frequently in the creation of Hupa words in the past makes it possible, and even likely, that the pattern will be used in the creation of new words.

Therefore it is useful to look for instances of the use of the process of metonymy in the creation of new words in Hupa, which can be seen in the examples in the next section. This list includes two examples of resemblance (R), namely ‘beans’, which focuses on the resemblance to pine nuts, and ‘spaghetti’,

which involves both an associated action frame (AAF) and resemblance. The action of dunking in water is used, as well as the fact that spaghetti looks like eelstrings (eel tendons).

na:de'tL'-nehwa:n	'beans' (pine nuts-they resemble) (R)
te'qi:wil q'ots' qi-ye:jo:-ne:wha:n	'spaghetti' (in the water it is dunked, looks like eelstrings) (AAF, R)

There is also an example of the use of image metaphor (IM), in 'coffee'. In this case, an image of what black water would look like is created, and this is compared to the item, coffee.

ta'na: na-Liwhin	'coffee' (water-black) (IM)
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There is also a case of metonymy (M) in this list. This is in the name for turkey, which uses a salient feature of the turkey, namely its coxcomb, to name the turkey.

mining'-q'it-nak'iLat'	'turkey' (its face-on-there is flapping around) (M)
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Finally, there are many examples of words which are named specifically using associated action frames, such as butter, which is named after the characteristic action of spreading butter on top of bread. We see again that this type of conceptual pattern is in the majority, and seems to be preferentially chosen in the creation of new nouns.

'aid:-nahL'its	'automobile/train' (by itself it runs around) (AAF)
miq'it-k'iwiLiw	'butter' (on top-it is smeared) (AAF)
mitah-'a:iL'e:n	'baking powder' (amongst it-someone scatters it) (AAF)
jiwolch-na'k'iLwal	'baseball' (ball-he hits it around) (AAF)
'a:diL-na:k'iLtal	'bicycle' (by oneself-one kicks around) (AAF)
misah-me:q'-silay	'bridle' (in [horse's] mouth-inside it-it [rope] lies) (AAF)

Thus we see that here, the same process described above (AAF), and seen in many traditional vocabulary items from Hupa, is used synchronically to create new words.

The inclination towards this process is so strong in Hupa that sometimes words which already have monomorphemic names also have other names which were created via these conceptual patterns. An example of this may be seen below.

'bobcat'	mindich	mimiLna:tal'-jiwol(-ch)
		its paw/foot(print)-round-(dimin.) (R)

Thus we see that for some items, there is a tendency to create names which use the processes discussed above alongside the already existing monomorphemic names. This could be due to the lexical content of these words. It is common in many languages for the names of powerful animals to be taboo under many circumstances, and thus for alternate names for them to exist side by side with the original names. This has happened in northern Indo-European languages where the name for bear is not inherited from Proto-Indo-European, but is made from phrases like 'honey-eater' or 'brown one' (Bloomfield 1933, 104). It is also the case in

Hupa that there are naming taboos in place which dictate that when a person passes away, their name may not be used.

The name of the person [who has died] cannot be spoken without offense, even when it is thought of in its common application as the name of an animal or object and not as the name of a person. A man of some note was called *xa*, "goose." After his death the word was avoided by saying *Lekontcditile*, "the one that likes salt." This name has established itself as the name of the wild goose, the younger people knowing no other. There are several other known examples of such creations. (Goddard 1903:73-4)

Thus, Hupa has had many such opportunities to create new words.

It is also important to notice that Hupa leans towards the use of certain formal structures. In particular, new nouns tend to be created using the third person singular of verbs. Interestingly, other languages can use the same conceptual patterns above, but different formal structures, as can be seen in the Havasupai examples, below (Leanne Hinton, personal communication). In Havasupai, generic nouns which are used as heads of relative clauses are attached to verbs in order to create new nouns. One of the most prolific of these prefixes is *gwe*, which could be glossed (in its nominalizing function) as 'the thing(s) that'. In many of its uses, it also relies on an associated action frame, as can be seen below.

<i>gwe</i> 'haavl 'aamj	'boat' (thing that goes in the water) (AAF)
<i>gwe</i> myaav g'am	'airplane' (thing that goes in the sky) (AAF)
<i>gwe</i> hwaaljo	'farm' (place where things are dug) (AAF)

Havasupai also uses other mechanisms which are discussed above, such as metonymy, utilizing prefixes in each case, unlike Hupa, which uses the third person singular of verbs in most of its new words. Other languages may also use the sort of frame metonymy patterns just discussed in naming structures, utilizing still different formal structures. For example, in English, it is possible to recruit a bare verb root via associated action frame metonymy to refer to an object, as in the nominal uses of 'spread' and 'cook'. Thus, these pervasive conceptual structures do not depend on a particular linguistic structure. It should be noted, however, that such uses of associated action frame metonymy are rare in English, especially when compared to the prolific use of this process in Hupa. So we see that a preference for a particular cognitive structure makes a language unique not because no other languages use that structure, but because they may not use that cognitive structure as frequently as another language does, and they may not combine it with the same formal structure.

The same conceptual structures which are used in the creation of new vocabulary can often be seen in other aspects of the grammar as well. An example of this can be seen in Mixtec (Alejandro de Avila, personal communication). Plant taxonomy in this language relies on the usefulness of the plants in question, rather than on biological similarities between the plants, although speakers are not unaware of these similarities. For example, there are two varieties of milkweed, which speakers recognize as being biologically similar, but which are given two different classifier prefixes. The first plant is used for medicinal purposes, and is given the prefix indicating that it belongs to the class of medicinal plants, *yuku-xatu*. The second plant is used in rituals, and is given a different prefix, *ita-kutu*. This classification by use also extends into other areas of the language, as in the

differentiation between two verbs for 'eat', with one of them, *xaxi*, being used to refer to foods which are snack-like, and the other of them, *xixi*, being used to refer to eating substantial meals, with tortillas, for example. In this case, it would appear that the latter type of food is seen as being of much more use to a person, giving energy, strength, and nutrition.

All languages have productive patterns which they use for such purposes as creating new words. These productive patterns are often associated with conceptual structures, such as frame metonymy. When a productive formal process uses a particular cognitive pattern, speakers are more likely to extend that pattern to the creation of, for example, new lexical items. This finding appears to indicate that the cognitive patterns which already exist in a language strongly influence the cognitive patterns which speakers use to extend and change the language. Since phenomena such as metonymy and frame semantic relationships are not simply linguistic, but are a way of conceptualizing the world, it is possible to conclude that this linguistic preference influences, and is influenced by, the cognitive preferences of the speakers.

These findings are also interesting for speakers of Native American languages who are revitalizing their languages. It shows that, even in the face of language change through lexical development, as speakers, the Hupa are helping their language to maintain the characteristics which make it unique — for example, its use of associated action frame metonymy. Note that it is not simply a use of AAFs which makes Hupa unique, as other languages can use this conceptual structure as well. But a combination of a particular formal method for creating new nouns, combined with the strongly preferred, and therefore prolific, use of associated action frames point to one feature which differentiates Hupa from many other languages. Such uses of frame metonymy are part of what creates the character of the language. It also allows speakers of Hupa to maintain ties to traditional culture. This is done in several ways. First, the terms themselves can refer back to traditional cultural items (for example, 'beans [like pine nuts]'). It also maintains a traditional grammatical pattern of naming things. And finally, the use of frame metonymy in naming modern items facilitates the placement of those items in a traditional context and worldview. Leanne Hinton paraphrases Parris Butler (Mojave apprentice in the Master-Apprentice program) talking about this process. "If I make up a descriptive term for the computer, I would be describing it in a non-traditional way. But if an elder, steeped in Mojave tradition, looks at the computer he will make up another term, one that describes the object from a more traditional value system" (Hinton 1995:39).

So, we can see that studying the creation of new words in Hupa can not only give us insight into human cognition, but just as importantly, it can give us a window into language and culture maintenance and revitalization. This one process allows us, as theoretical linguists, to draw conclusions about language processing and the interrelationship between language and culture. It also allows us, as people who are interested in the language maintenance programs which exist all around us in this state, insight into the amazing ability of a language to undergo a great deal of change and to still maintain its own unique character.

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