ROUTLEDGE LINGUISTICS CLASSICS

LANGUAGE AND CREATIVITY

THE ART OF COMMON TALK

RONALD CARTER

ROUTLEDGE

Language and Creativity

Language and Creativity has become established as a pivotal text for courses in English Language, Linguistics and Literacy.

Creativity in language has conventionally been regarded as the preserve of institutionalised discourses such as literature and advertising, and individual gifted minds. In this ground-breaking book, bestselling author Ronald Carter explores the idea that creativity, far from being simply a property of exceptional people, is an exceptional property of all people.

Drawing on a range of real examples of everyday conversations and speech, from flatmates in a student house and families on holiday to psychotherapy sessions and chat-lines, the book argues that creativity is an all-pervasive feature of everyday language. Using close analysis of naturally occurring language, taken from a unique five million word corpus, *Language and Creativity* reveals that speakers commonly make meanings in a variety of creative ways, in a wide range of social contexts and for a diverse set of reasons.

This Routledge Linguistics Classic is here reissued with a new preface from the author, covering a range of key topics from e-language and internet discourse to politics, social context and value(s) to English language teaching, media communication and world Englishes. *Language and Creativity* continues to build on the previous theories of creativity, offering a radical contribution to linguistic, literary and cultural theory. A must for anyone interested in the creativity of our everyday speech.

Ronald Carter is Research Professor of Modern English Language in the School of English at the University of Nottingham, UK. He is the series co-editor of the *Routledge Applied Linguistics* and *Routledge Introductions to Applied Linguistics* series. His recent books include: *How to Analyse Texts* (Routledge, 2016), *Spoken Corpus Linguistics* (Routledge, 2013) and *Vocabulary* (reissued as a Routledge Linguistics Classic, 2012).

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Language and Creativity

The art of common talk

Ronald Carter

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Contents

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Illustrations

Figures

Tables

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In general the arts establishment connives to keep alive the myth of the special, creative individual artist holding out against passive mass consumerism . . . Against this we insist that there is a vibrant symbolic life and symbolic creativity current in everyday life, everyday activity and expression – even if it is sometimes invisible, looked down on or spurned. We don't want to invent it or propose it. We want to recognise it – literally re-cognise it . . .

We are thinking of the extraordinary creativity of the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate and invest with meanings their common and immediate life space and social practices – personal styles and choice of clothes, selective and active use of music, TV, magazines, decoration of bedrooms; the rituals of romance and subcultural styles; the style, banter and drama of friendship groups, music-making and dance . . . There is work, even desperate work in their play.

(Willis *et al.*, 1990: 1–2)

Literature lives within language and language within everyday life. The study of literature must live within the study of language, and the study of language within the study of the everyday mind . . .

These assumptions are deadly. Common language expressing common thought is anything but simple, and its workings are not obvious. Special language expressing special thought is an exploitation of the common and to be analyzed only in relation to it.

(Turner, 1991: 4, 14)

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Ronald Carter, Nottingham, July 2015

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Acknowledgements for the First Edition

> Many, and perhaps most, creative accomplishments in this world are neither the products of single individuals working in isolation nor the products of historical geniuses but are instead the products of several people working in intended or unintended collaboration.
>
> (Harrington, 1999: 144)

It is now standard practice to make something close to an Oscar acceptance speech in book acknowledgements. And this book is no exception. It cannot be otherwise, since the more I reread the book the more I realise I haven't really done that much by myself.

Above all, I owe much, and much more than he will himself acknowledge, to Michael McCarthy, friend, collaborator, fellow-traveller and co-director of the CANCODE project. Mike has over the past twenty years provided all manner of points of inspiration for my own work, and in work we have done together; the many conversations, exchanges of ideas and joint seminars we have had mean, as a quick look at the bibliography for this book will demonstrate, that, not just in a metaphoric sense, this book is as much his as mine. Several of the chapters here contain voicings, tracings and in some cases liftings from papers we have co-authored, and I am grateful to Mike for allowing me to use them co-creatively in this book. I also owe much to Chris Candlin, who has provided inspiration to and encouragement of many, many academics in the field of applied linguistics and is simply the best editor and critical commentator on the work of others that I have had the pleasure to work with. Much of the work in the following chapters derives from Chris's own work on creativity over the years, and I have benefited greatly from innumerable conversations with him and for his encouragement to me in this work – which dates back to an American Applied Linguistics Association conference in Baltimore in 1994. I also owe more than they may imagine to Guy Cook, John McRae and Rob Pope, whose work on literary language, creativity and language play has been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration during the writing of this book. Rob Pope was generous enough to allow me to see an advance copy of a manuscript for a forthcoming book (Pope, forthcoming) from which I not only learned much but also filched some excellent quotations. And particular thanks

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CANCODE and Cambridge University Press

This book has made use of the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE). CANCODE is a 5-million-word computerised corpus of spoken English, made up of recordings from a variety of settings in the countries of the United Kingdom and Ireland. The corpus is designed with a substantial organised database giving information on participants, settings and conversational goals. CANCODE was built by Cambridge University Press and the University of Nottingham and it forms part of the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). It provides insights into language use, and offers a resource to supplement what is already known about English from other, non-corpus-based research, thereby providing valuable and accurate information for researchers and those preparing teaching materials. Sole copyright of the corpus resides with Cambridge University Press, from whom all permission to reproduce material must be obtained.

Ronald Carter
Nottingham, July 2003

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Preface

Language and Creativity: recent past and nearer future

> Every culture proliferates along its margins. Iruptions take place that are called 'creations' in relation to stagnancies. Bubbling out of swamps and bogs, a thousand flashes at once scintillate and are extinguished all over the surface of a society. … Daily life is scattered with marvels, a froth on the long rhythm of language and history that is as dazzling as that of writers and artists.
>
> (de Certeau, 1997:139-42)

Apparent Madrid; Real So So Bad; North Career; Partizan Potternewton; Real Madras.[1]

This chapter has two main purposes: to reflect on major changes in the field of creativity and language studies since the publication in 2004 of the first edition of *Language and Creativity: The art of common talk*; and to offer, as a complement to this necessarily largely retrospective view, a brief view of some likely directions that this field might take in the future.

In the past decade and a half creativity studies have become an even more highly active field of research and application. One chapter cannot, of course, capture all of this diversity and richness; this chapter is organised therefore around key landmarks. These are:

1. Language and creativity: the moving landscape
2. Corpus and creativity
3. New media and creativity: a spoken written continuum
4. Politics, social context and value(s)
5. Pasts and futures: new research directions.

1. Language and Creativity: the moving landscape

In the past century and stretching back even further in time the topic of creativity has tended to be seen and investigated largely as a matter of mind and cognition. The first chapter of this book seeks to explore this dimension and to underline its importance to our better understanding of creativity and its particular properties. Work in this tradition has continued (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2006) and has

enhanced our better understanding of the relationship between the human mind and its production of language with far reaching implications both for fundamental research in psychology and for its applications to, for example, education, including theories of language learning and teaching (see 4. below as well as Mueller, Melwani and Goncalo, 2012 and Amabile and Pillemer, 2012 for more social and cognitive perspectives). Exploring and explaining creativity continues to be central to efforts to unravel the minds of exceptional individuals, seeing individual creative outputs mainly as exemplars of an essentialist and universal cognitive capacity. In relation to major cultural artefacts such as music, art and literature the nature of creativity also continues to be seen as something separate and apart, placing the individuals who exemplify it in a world that only few do or can inhabit.

There is no denying the continuing value of research in this tradition, while it is likewise perverse to deny that there is no such thing as individual genius or that there are no creative outputs that do not have an enduring value and transformative resonance within particular cultural contexts and particular value systems. Two eloquent and challenging recent accounts that insist on the significance of this account and argue against what is seen as the narrowly 'clinal' description found in this book can be found in Cameron (2011) and Cook (2011). Both stress that producing what is shown in this book as ordinary or everyday creativity is in both essence and quality different from the work of creative artists and different from the processes of creative art and cannot be discounted by a view of creativity seen in their view as relativistic or as no more than a simple creativity continuum.

However, this century is witnessing a greater opening up of the topic of creativity to different research traditions which in turn are playing a part in re-conceptualising language and creativity and in re-positioning it in more interdisciplinary frameworks and contexts across the humanities, social sciences and sciences. Central to these alternative paradigms and central to a greater shift away from more psychological and mentalistic approaches to creativity is the notion of discourse and of language as social discourse. Put crudely, this focus means that creative language is not seen as separate from the social conditions of its production, from the people who use it or from the technologies used to produce it (Jones, 2012). Creativity used to be seen only as something to unlock from private minds; it is now seen as something that is co-constructed in interaction and dialogue, as operating in groups as well as in individuals, as involving the receiver as well as the producer of creative entities and as occupying a place not simply in artistic, aesthetic or literary realms but in a wide variety of different forms of communication (Maybin and Swann, 2006; Swann, 2012 a and b; Atkins and Carter, 2010; Peplow, 2014; Stockwell, 2009; Holmes, 2007; Handford and Koester, 2010; Mason and Carter, forthcoming as well as numerous papers in Munat, 2007).

The word creative does not now only collocate with 'writing' or 'literature' or 'art' or 'poetic'; it collocates with an astonishing variety of concepts and words such

as *silence*, *business*, *professional*, *media practices, classroom learning*, *internet, public relations, architecture, digital, scientific, personal relationships*, *English as a lingua franca* (ELF), *improvisation*, *computational, humour, industries* and *play.* And in the conjunction of creativity with language play, creativity is not just allied with a post-romantic preoccupation with serious production but is also properly consonant in both a literal and metaphoric sense with re-creation. In *Language and Creativity: The art of common talk* the aim has always been to underline the significance of this direction and since its publication in 2004 the move towards the social discourse dimensions of language and creativity has grown exponentially (for a more comprehensive overview of these many aspects of creativity, see Jones, 2015). This chapter can only review a segment of these developments and it does so with particular reference to creativity in relation to spoken language.

2. Corpus and creativity

Corpus, creativity and patterns

> *An understanding of the background of the usual and everyday – what happens millions of times – is necessary in order to understand the unique.*
>
> (Stubbs 2005: 5)

A five million word corpus of spoken discourse was used as a principal source to illustrate examples of creative language in use in this book. At the outset of this section and with reference to corpus data it should be noted that the CANCODE spoken corpus used for the empirical data for this book has also been criticised (Culpeper, 2011) as being in places overly consensual and lacking in the kinds of conflictual data of argument and disagreement that may sometimes provide a quite different colour and texture to definitions of creativity and to how it may be seen to operate in spoken discourse. Culpeper's is a helpful reminder that careful scrutiny of the organisation of any database is vital before too many claims are made for properties of language use.

In the intervening years since 2004 both corpus methodologies and the range of corpora themselves have grown rapidly and more studies are relying less on individual perceptions and intuitions of creativity and more on empirical evidence drawn from large language databases. Renouf (2007) draws primarily from a large newspaper corpus of over 700 million words, collected between 1989 and 2005, and examines lexical creativity in a diachronic manner but suggests possibilities for similar explorations in spoken corpora over time. With particular reference to figurative language in different discourses Handford and Koester (2010), Cameron (2007) and Semino (2008) also offer text and corpus-based analyses of contexts of spoken and written interaction.

Corpora have played a large part in creativity studies and have undeniably pushed the field forward. Different aspects of creativity have been unravelled using corpus data and analyses, strengthening our understanding of the subject matter. That creative language in the form of everyday metaphors, puns, idioms, riddles or verbal duelling, and the like, is ubiquitous in everyday conversations has led authors to argue that creativity and literariness are not exclusive to literature, the same case that is argued throughout this book. Examples include a study of idiomaticity (Langlotz, 2006) which draws on the British National Corpus database and Hoey (2007a and b) which draw on a range of corpora; both also have a particular relevance for studies of patterns of figures of speech explored in chapter 3 of this book (see also Vo and Carter (2010) for an overview).

Hoey's concept of *lexical priming*, (Hoey 2005), that is, the process whereby a word becomes cumulatively loaded with our knowledge of the contexts and co-texts in which it is encountered is an especially relevant corpus-based account with relevance for our understanding of language and creativity. The priming effect is, however, as Hoey emphasises, more a matter of weighting, than a matter of rule. As a result, creativity is possible through resistance to rules of priming by a selective overriding of the primings (see again Hoey, 2007a and b). For example, the habitual collocates of *break out*, as evidenced in the British National Corpus (BNC), include generally unpleasant or undesirable things and events, showing a tendency towards negative meanings or negative 'semantic prosodies'. Such co-occurrences dictate that any 'pleasant' collocates of this phrasal verb are to be considered departures from recurrent patterns. As a result, when *freedom* (a desirable state of affairs) is coupled with *break out* as in '*freedom was breaking out everywhere*' (BNC), the sentence is considered creative, unusual and intended to emphasise and draw attention to the paradoxes inherent in the statement.

Semantic annotation and creative idiomaticity

Further technical advances in corpus linguistics are still required. Various studies in corpus linguistics, supported by other research in the field of cognitive semantics, suggest that the fixedness of idioms may be actually conceptual rather than lexical. For example, in Vo and Carter (2010) and as illustrated alongside the canonical form *eat humble pie*, the following variants were found in the BNC (spoken and written) among the concordances for the phrase *humble pie*:

were swallowing large slices of **humble pie** after the reformed
for ever now began to chew **humble pie** and were drawn to
Yes, I tasted the sourness of **humble pie** … 'So do you
He found the taste of **humble pie** just a little too much to stomach

Although the actual word *eat* is replaced in these examples, the concept is still there, albeit with slightly different meanings imparted to each substitute *swallow*,

chew, *taste* or *taste the sourness of*, *to stomach*. It suggests that corpora need to be semantically annotated and tagged into semantic categories on the basis of their senses being related to each other at some level, including synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms (the same principles are used in the electronic lexical database WordNet, see Fellbaum, 1998). In the case of *swallow/chew/taste/stomach humble pie* above, for instance, if all the synonyms of 'eat' could be considered and incorporated into the concordances, the probability of identifying creative variants of the idiom would significantly increase.

Wmatrix — a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison — provides, alongside methodologies such as frequency lists and concordances, a web interface to CLAWS — a corpus annotation tool developed at the University of Lancaster, England. The software offers automatic semantic annotation of English texts whereby each content word in the text is assigned a value within 21 primary semantic fields, which are then further subdivided into 232 categories. F1 for example, is the category of FOOD. The level of sophistication of these categories still requires further elaboration, but the principles can be applied to any corpus so that each word can be tagged with semantic information as well as lexico-grammatical information. The tool has been applied to a number of different literary texts: for examples of applications see Archer, Culpeper and Rayson (2010) and Culpeper, Hoover and Louw (2010). Compared with the CLAWS syntactic tagger, *Wmatrix* is at its current stage of development only about 90% reliable, so it is necessary, in order to discount oddities, to explore qualitatively the contexts of the vocabulary items, as well as understand more precisely how the lexical items operate thematically. But this does not invalidate its developing value in helping systematic analysis not just of literary vocabularies but of everyday creative spoken language too.

These and similar corpus search tools increase the possibility of identifying creative variants of different figures of speech while at the same time easing the potentially laborious process of performing repeated individual searches for each entry. It is one of many future challenges and one with particular relevance for the play with semantic categories that can be so pervasive in everyday interpersonal spoken discourse.

3. New media and creativity: a spoken written continuum

It is estimated (very conservatively) that 100 billion emails, 300 million tweets and 6 billion SMS messages are sent and received each day. A number of recent studies (e.g. Sindoni 2013) have illustrated that such texts offer rich material for explorations of creativity in everyday interaction, providing a further extension to material covered in the final chapter of this book (chapter 6) where it is argued that e-language of this kind has features associated with the immediacy, turn-taking conventions and fluencies of spoken communication. Such forms of communication

indicate a marked turn to lexico-grammatical structures that are close to speech but are associated with neither speech nor writing and are rather more accurately described as hybrid forms or an amalgam of both speech and writing (Crystal 2011: 69ff).

Corpus research has continued here too with studies undertaken on individual forms of e-language from SMS messages, to blogs and e-mails. At present such corpora tend to be either small-scale and/or consist of a single e-language variety (Tagg, 2012). Research involving the one million word CANELC[2] corpus has, however, enabled fuller exploration of forms and functions between and across different forms of e-language and is an example of a possible future phase in the exploration of the evolution of spoken creativity (see Carter and McCarthy (2015) for a fuller review with particular reference to spoken grammar).

Corpus evidence reveals patterns of on-line 'chat' that, though obviously written or keyed into a screen, is commonly formed from grammatical features such as situational ellipsis, free-standing or independent 'subordinate' clauses, sentence tags, and phonetic representations of speech that bring it closer to spoken than to written representation. As Tagg (2012) has illustrated it is also a rich source of word play and creative pattern-forming and re-forming.

A: Ooh, 4got, i'm gonna start belly dancing in moseley weds 6.30 if u want 2 join me, they have a cafe too.
B: Not sure I have the stomach for it ...
A: Yeah right! I'll bring my tape measure fri!
B: Ho ho - big belly laugh! See ya tomo x

A: Lets say 8.30. Im gonna b late.
B: Yes see ya not on the dot
A: Thanks lotsly!

The CANELC corpus contains similar examples from everyday text messages:

> [message between two friends aged 25–29]:
>
> Hahaha, will be over in ten to decide a plan for the day. Pop the kettle on. Quite fancy tea. Should I bring some cow juice with me.

The CANELC corpus also includes examples from *twitter* where more public and self-conscious word play and humour exists but with a clearer sense of a wider audience and of pressure to maintain, play with, construct and re-construct social identities (Page, 2011).

> When in writing mode I get up earlier and earlier. 3.45 this morning. Bonkers. Trouble is, it means I'm ready for bed at 7. Sheesh. [taken from @Stephen Fry: CANELC corpus]

> I'm going to meditate now and tune into the silent consciousness that unites us all. ALL. So, abundant, limitless love to EVERYBODY. X [taken from @Russell Brand: CANELC corpus]

In some cases, especially in more personalised forms such as texts and twitter feeds, a spoken character is commonly further enhanced by the inscription (page and text metaphors continue) of a physical presence in the shape of exclamations, discourse markers, capitalizations, abbreviations, omissions of apostrophes and commas, haptic discourse (e.g. *hugz*), kisses (*xx*), emojis and smileys - punctuation, in other words, designed primarily to capture voice and to mark, signal, co-construct, or negotiate identity and relationship. And these are only some of the possible forms. The absence of a face-to-face dynamic may, depending on context, contribute to a greater individual presence and identity display. Alternatively, it may be that the pressures of speed of communication override (or, conversely, reinforce an expressive and creative play with) textual choices (Sindoni 2013). As we do so, in some cases we move across data streams from one physical space or dynamic context to another or, in some digital modes such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, across multiple audiences with the added creative potential for re-sending, copying and re-tweeting accepted as part of the dynamic of multiply distributed communication across time and space (see Fung and Carter, 2007; North, 2008; Shortis, 2007, Goddard, 2011; Tagg, 2015; Sergeant and Tagg 2012). Thurlow (2012) illustrates many of the creative possibilities of self-consciously playful visuality with examples drawn from non-institutionalised on-line data where social and personal relationship boundaries are challenged and explored. Thurlow also makes the case that discursive creativity, especially in the on-line discourses of young people in these new media, is 'often poetic, usually playful and always pragmatic'.

4. Politics, social context and value(s)

Thurlow (2012) is interested, however, not simply in these dimensions but also in exploring what exactly is the value in creativity and how and by whom values are defined and determined. He underlines how power, politics and ideology cannot be discounted and shows how the creative play with word forms, spellings, interactive practices is devalued by the 'adult' world which controls judgements on what counts as creative. At the same time, of course, such creativity is appropriated by that same adult world for commercial purposes in the world of advertising and promotion. Creativity researchers have not yet evolved appropriately nuanced research tools for capturing and accounting for such emergent, rapidly developing and sometimes transient creativity as is found in new media discourses. It is, of course, too, not simply a matter of better refining our description of verbal

creativity in such domains but also a matter of locating and utilising tools for appreciating and valuing such technologically mediated creativity as it occurs across different times and spaces and cultural locations. It is recognized too that just because it is technologically innovative is not an automatic or non-negotiable sign of creativity.

One of the aims of *Language and Creativity: The art of common talk* is to question and contest standard descriptions of creativity. Since 2004 these questions have been taken further in many different studies and it is clear that the socio-contextual database of the book would need to be considerably extended to account for the wider domains of activity and practice, including, for example, language and globalization, political and commercial activity and the relationship between the verbal and the visual, all of which raise important further questions of politics and value. The twenty-first century theoretical and practical positioning of creativity and linguistic creativity research in relation to social contexts of use and to discourses of production and reception therefore raises significant questions. We are asking not simply: what is creativity? We are asking: How is creativity appreciated and valued? And who makes the valuation anyway and with what criteria? One key question, for example, is how the global nature of and status of the English language may be reconfiguring its use for linguistic and semiotic use and do we possess the appropriate frameworks for evaluating such creativities? (see Pitzl, 2012; Isar, 2010; Pennycook, 2010; Hultgren, forthcoming). Indeed, the very fact that creativity in English is seen as ordinary, everyday and global could be said to require even more attention to issues of value.

Swann and Maybin (2008) give particular attention to *contextuality*. The ways in which we see creativity are constantly being reshaped, sometimes rapidly and sometimes more imperceptibly, by new cultural, societal and technological forces and this is, as indicated in 3. above, even more the case in an age of ever more ubiquitous digital media practices. The notion of creativity and contextuality raises numerous key questions. For example: to what extent can context be a determining or constitutive factor in creative production? In fact, is context only a matter of social factors, that is, simply a matter of who writes/speaks what to whom, how, when and where? How far is creativity in context a mix of cognitive and social factors and, if so, what is needed for cognitive factors to be more fully integrated and evaluated? To what extent will aesthetic questions remain central to judgements of and responses to creativity? How far can we define creative language only in relation to its socio-poetic functions and how should we and how can we, in the light of substantial research in sociolinguistics, pragmatics and socio-cultural discourse analysis, embrace the ways in which all kinds of language can function to perform creative acts? How far are we able to say what isn't creative?

Here we are seeing creativity not just as 'language' but as what people do with language and the creative social actions they take with it (to give only random examples): to solve a problem; to re-accent a relationship; to produce a new kind of critical and subversive blog; to use colour or photographs or a moving image to enhance a job application; to develop a business strategy that challenges existing practice; to co-create with a team of fellow carers new ways of re-structuring interactions with patients in a care home, where previously more predictable or routine actions obtained; to generate laughter and humour by surprising word play or picture in digital media such as Twitter or Instagram.

Sometimes creative actions such as these are bold and innovative and involve overt individual displays; sometimes they involve more incremental and glacial shifts in collective behaviours. To discount this more covert action as uncreative is to narrow and limit definitions of creativity or to isolate creativity within only a single exclusive and possibly elitist aesthetic sphere. Even given recent improved corpus-informed accounts of the relationship between creativity and social context, a number of questions remain. These are elusive questions demanding much more empirical and ethnographic fieldwork. In many ways such considerations move us beyond language form per se and require a shift from the traditional emphasis in creativity studies on the *producer of* and *in* the creative process.

For example, if there is a shift in the way we communicate with one another in the workplace, especially in the use of new social media, how can these often very gradual processes be calibrated in the creative experience of the users of these media? How creatively produced are these new forms of communication, how are they registered and developed, conformed to and deviated from by individual users? And what can the newly created re-shapings of communication tell us about different social and interpersonal conditions?

Developing further understanding of the connections between creativity and context offers real possibilities, therefore, not only for tighter specification of the fit between creative language use and the type of interaction and social roles engaged in by speakers and speaker/writers but the process also underlines the need for a fuller description of context in terms of 'participant design'. There has been a focus in this book on the interrelations between creativity and social context, facilitated in part by producer data that is sociolinguistically profiled and differentiated contextually and generically. A clear requirement now is to embrace not simply the producer but the *receiver* of creative processes and to shift the analytical attention towards greater assessment and appraisal of creative outputs with the aim of gaining better understanding of processes of reception on the part of different socially positioned readers or viewers of or participants in creative performances.

It is a position that entails a consideration of values rather than value (Carter, 2007). There are strong cultural tendencies to see value, especially aesthetic value,

as a singular, timeless and contextually-transcendent property. A more plural position proposes that contextually variable values should prevail in preference to more universalist assumptions of value, developing a collective, variable and social aesthetics rather than the singular individualist aesthetics conventionally associated with much post-Romantic culture. This process was foreshadowed by the early work of Czech structuralists such as Jan Mukarovsky who in their turn were reacting to the largely decontextualised, overly text-immanent focus of the early Russian formalists who have had such an influence on Western modernist aesthetics. To paraphrase Mukarovsky: cultural and aesthetic variationism and the boundaries between the various realms of culture are permeable, shifting and variable from community to community. Aesthetics is for Mukarovsky domain- and culture-specific. There can, therefore, be no coherent essentialist or universalist specification of art. "…the attitude which the individual takes toward reality and to the reality depicted by the artistic object….is determined by the social relationships in which the individual is involved" (Mukarovksky (1936/1970:16) Mukarovsky's position requires an acceptance of contexts as dynamic and changing. Such a position sharply qualifies the notion advanced in chapter 2: that of a single cline from the literary or the aesthetic product to the non-literary, which assumes one continuum of value from high to low, from the transcendent to 'everyday' (terms with an already inbuilt metaphoric assumption of value). In other words, value is context-and culture-specific and cannot simply be a universal or timeless quality.

And yet again the pertinent question is: who is responsible for accepting something as creative? For example, in the context of the teaching and learning of second or foreign languages where are lines drawn between errors and creative uses of language by learners? Instead of the dismissal of much second or foreign language creative production as error, what community or local or context-specific conditions and value systems obtain in order for the creativity of a language learner to be recognised and accepted? Such questions have been significantly advanced in the past decade and a half. Prodromou (2008) is an illuminating study of the difficulties that SUEs (successful users of English) have in generating creative uses of idiom (as opposed to being seen as making errors) in everyday conversational exchanges when they are perceived as non-native by a particular community of users. (See also Pitzl, 2012 and a very valuable overview of these questions by Bell, 2012.)

5. Pasts and Futures: new research directions

Some main conclusions in the light of future research challenges are:

- Firstly, that there are real dangers in seeing creativity wholly in terms of producers and producer design. Future research into language and creativity

needs to take fuller account of recipient design and construct social ethnographic research that captures such perspectives, while simultaneously accepting that implicit intentions and motivations cannot ever be fully accessed in the retrospection and prompted recall of our researched subjects. Such research can nonetheless provide a platform for capturing more dynamic and emergent participant perceptions and researcher descriptions of context.

- Secondly, that we need to be better able to specify what is *not* creative. Language learning and teaching may be a valuable site for such exploration. For example, it is widely hypothesised that the more the working memory demands of a task, the more memorised patterns of formulaic speech will be used; the less the working memory, the more creative the constructions that are likely to be produced. There now exists a growing literature on formulaic language, its role in communication and its contribution to fluency in second language learning contexts with growing evidence provided from large corpus-based samples that illustrate the extent to which such forms of language occupy a significant place in the total output of users, especially in spoken language where processing constraints indicate a greater reliance on 'fixed' as opposed to creative expressions (see Wray, 2008). To what extent does the existence of formulaic sequences have implications for how creativity is described? Is it only a matter of working memory? What are the social and interactive contexts where speakers can rely more on pre-processed language, what are the contexts in which they can be more overtly creative by breaking rules and what are the contexts in which creativity can be based on more creative uses of repetition and, as is suggested more than once in this book, what are the contexts in which pedagogies for creativity can be supported? To do this, we need to view the language classroom differently in terms of what is sanctioned interactively and what is seen as acceptable as language use. Such a research design would considerably expand the data and directions explored in chapter 4 of this book in relation to figurative speech.
- Thirdly, creativity in spoken language is never simply a matter of words. Words are accompanied by body language and the use of gestures, eye-contact and gaze, as well as uses of silence, and different kinesic and proxemic constraints. And the communication is often even more acute in the case of the listener who, while not speaking much, may contribute even more (creatively) to a communication through channels of non-verbal feedback. As e-communication becomes ubiquitous and pervasive in everyday life, our descriptive frameworks may require some re-evaluation in terms of the extent to which they can account for simultaneous, multi-channel communication and the more constantly shifting and fragmented nature of contexts of use (Adolphs and Carter, 2013:180). In complex social media, a mid-ground between interactive audio messages, texts that are conventionally written, those which are

written-as-if-speaking, body language and other visual anchors such as photographs and video clips may emerge, creating new relationships between language and its contexts of use, and new, unforeseen creative configurations, including new orthographic symbols and innovative punctuation. We can no longer assume that the definition of a 'conversation' is anything as simple as a face-to-face or even an audio-visual encounter unfolding sequentially in real time. Multi-modal corpora are a step in the direction of a fuller breaking down of boundaries between text and context and, in the case of speaking, avoid the separation of speech and gesture. This is one of the richest potential sites for further research into language and creativity, especially in its less institutionalised forms and at the rapidly evolving interfaces between spoken, written and visual modes. (See in particular Veale, 2012 for a challenging account of computational creativity.)

There are many approaches to creativity described in the preceding paragraphs (as well as others not mentioned or mentioned only indirectly). Creativity and the challenges to us in better understanding its importance is a defining feature of our times. It is important to embrace creative writing, literary stylistic approaches, conventional analysis of literary tropes, creativity in everyday discourses, creativity and cognition, corpus and computational resources for creativity research, multilingual creativity, creativity in language learning and teaching, creative internet use, translation and creative language use, creativity within and across different Englishes. And it embraces, of course, numerous other investigative and methodological foci, including substantial empirical data to provide the basis for yet richer theory and description. This book, with its emphasis on creativity in everyday 'common talk' is only one part of this developing and ever-moving landscape but it is hoped that it continues to be seen as one key figure in that landscape.

Notes

1 Names of 5-a-side football teams playing in amateur leagues in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, England. Some of the names play self-deprecatingly with famous teams in Europe. 'North Career' represents players from a government Employment Office in the north of England; 'Real Madras' represents players from an Indian restaurant.
2 CANELC stands for Cambridge and Nottingham E-language Corpus, a one million word corpus of internet communication. The corpus is © Cambridge University Press. For further description see Knight, Adolphs and Carter (2014).

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Introduction

The genesis of the book

In the Beginning was the Word.

Starting points for books can often be accidental. It was several years ago now when the starting point for this book was found, somewhat unpropitiously, one dark and slightly misty autumnal morning as I was making my trolley-pushing way towards the check-in of a local regional airport. My eye was caught by a single line of red and blue letters spread out across a large glass-fronted placard. They were arrayed in a straight line against a plain white background. The letters were the letters of the alphabet. Momentarily intrigued by the sight of the alphabet occurring in this form and in this context, I looked more closely, not at first noticing that one of the letters was missing and that its absence was accentuated by a gap between the letter *p* and the letter *r*, more or less as follows:

abcdefghijklmnop rstuvwxyz

Closer inspection revealed, of course, that the placard was an advertisement for an airline which counted among the proclaimed benefits of travelling business class the fact that there were no 'queues' at its check-in desk and that check-in for passengers with hand luggage only could be undertaken automatically by a machine.

Several minutes later when I was sitting in the departures lounge my thoughts were disturbed by the person next to me, a young Irishman who was holding a child (a little girl about 18 months of age) in his arms and moving her rhythmically back and forth while gazing intently into her eyes and occasionally rubbing his nose against hers. He was softly singing nursery rhymes which I had long forgotten having sung to my own children but which were soon recalled almost verbatim with a surprising immediacy.

Hickory, dickory dock
The mouse ran up the clock
The clock struck one

The mouse ran down
Hickory, dickory dock

Diddle, diddle dumpling my son John
Went to bed with his trousers on
One shoe off and one shoe on
Diddle, diddle dumpling my son John.

Later that same day I found myself in a seminar discussing with a group of teachers some differences between spoken and written English, and during the course of the discussion I put the following short conversational exchange (extracted from a computer-based corpus which I had been compiling) onto a projector in order for us to examine some of the ways in which spoken discourses utilise lexical vagueness ('a bob or two', 'things', 'and stuff', 'and things'). Almost involuntarily I became distracted by the repetition of the word 'bob/Bob', a feature of this text to which I had not previously paid any particular attention:

[Three students in Bristol are talking about the landlord of a mutual friend]

A: Yes, he must have a bob or two.
B: Whatever he does he makes money out of it, just like that.
C: Bob's your uncle.
B: He's quite a lot of money erm tied up in property and things. He's got a finger in all kinds of pies and houses and stuff. A couple in Bristol, one in Clevedon I think.

I began to consider why the word 'bob' was repeated, why there appeared to be no straightforward semantic connection between the two 'bobs', what kinds of attitudes and feelings may have been aroused for the speakers by the particular choice of echo and just how conscious or otherwise such a choice might be.

These three seemingly unconnected instances are provoking and I have since then begun increasingly to puzzle over them and to explore the parallels and points of connection between them. The first example, the *no queue* advertisement, is relatively easily recognisable as an instance of the widespread uses of striking wordplay and imaginative textual semiosis designed to capture a reader/viewer's attention. Very often too, as here, the message is inexplicit and some interpretative work is required to work out its meaning. In this example there is a deliberate focus on the message in that the text draws our attention by breaking with expectation. Thus, the letters of the alphabet have an established order which is broken here by a missing letter, the interpretative work centring on creative deviation from a norm. The alphabetic sequence breaks and reforms, but only after the reader/viewer, who has of course to be predisposed to do such things, has come to read a new and original slant on the meaning of the text. The text of *no queue* is a widespread and culturally pervasive example of creativity in everyday communication. Its basic textual strategies are familiar

and have been the subject of a number of recent seminal linguistic studies (see Cook, 2000).

The second example is different in so far as the content is less transparent; indeed, it would take undue amounts of imaginative energy to work out a meaning for many of the words and phrases in these nursery rhymes. For example, what are the meanings in this context of *diddle* and *dumpling*? They have established dictionary definitions but their normal referential meaning seems to be suspended in this instance, particularly since the remainder of the text asks us to forgo any formal logical understanding of why John might go to bed dressed in trousers while alternately dispensing with a single shoe. And about the mouse which runs up and down a clock seemingly in order to coincide with the striking of the hour, the less said the better, particularly when it does so to the beat of the barely intelligible *hickory dickory dock*.

The communicative purpose of the nursery rhymes is of course not so straightforward or conventional as the *no queue* advertisement. The context of the young Irish father singing when in close physical proximity to his daughter is crucial. The content of the message matters less than its communicability. It is performed rather than 'read'. The sounds and movement of the rhyme, especially its repetitions, powerfully override the referential meaning. Both nursery rhymes are representational before they are referential, their primary purpose being to represent and, by representing, to help to create a relationship, here a close physical relationship. The patterns of sound, lexis and grammatical structure are familiar and they are repeated, reinforcing rather than re-forming a way of seeing and doing. In its way each nursery rhyme is as creative as the *no queue* text, although, because repetition is conventionally seen not to be inventive, in many societies the advertisement would be more highly valued for its creative use of language.

The third example is more intriguing still, and in ways which go a long way beyond my initial preoccupation with the communicative functions of vague language and with the differences and distinctions between the lexico-grammar of spoken and written discourse. This spoken exchange deviates from familiar existing patterns in particular ways. Take, for example, the ways in which idioms are used. Idioms are regularly fixed in their form (for example, you can take a short sleep by *having forty winks* – though not 'fifty' or 'thirty-nine' winks), but in this exchange the idiomatic patterns are re-formed and extended so that the established idiom *to have a finger in every pie* is creatively transmuted into *He's got a finger in all kinds of pies and houses and stuff.* On the other hand, other idioms such as *Bob's your uncle* serve, as I have already suggested, a more echoing function, repeating a previous form, at least in terms of the word *bob*. The speaker appears to choose to repeat or at least to echo the pattern in order to concur with the previous speaker. There is a clear ideational content to the exchange here, for the speakers are talking about the relative wealth of a local landlord, but, as in the example of nursery rhymes, some of the language choices create a convergent relationship, in particular by negotiating and reinforcing a certain way of seeing things.

Notice, too, the rhetorical figure of understatement. When speaker A states

that the landlord *must have a bob or two* he is implying that he is wealthy. The phrase is close to idiom of course, and is in a way one of a memory store of fixed expressions from which speakers select, but the choice is none the less marked as one which invites the other speakers not to take what is said only at its most literal but also to evaluate what is said. Indeed, across this whole conversational extract, short though it is, there is not only a pervasively creative wordplay, but the wordplay is doing more than merely displaying or achieving a focus on content. It is introducing a more affective element into the discourse by creating attitudes and by creating and reinforcing relationships. And as I have deliberated on this extract, a further intriguing feature is the precise nature of the echo of the word *bob/Bob* which originally and almost involuntarily attracted my attention. There is no clear semantic parallel between a coin (*bob*) and a name (*Bob* even in idiomatic form) and so the parallel is established either accidentally or by means of an altogether more subliminal configuration – a possibility which requires psychological as well as social or cultural explanation.

In exploring these questions further I have become more engaged by examples 2 and 3 than by example 1. Example 1 is a written text, and discussions of creativity and wordplay in relation to written examples are relatively widely available, and especially in recent years from a more linguistic point of view. As already mentioned, there are books which analyse the linguistic formation of advertisements and such books continue a line of stylistic analysis of creative language use going back almost a century to the first linguistic analyses of the language of literary texts. Such sources are valuable in that continuities and commonalities between written and spoken texts cannot be denied, and frameworks drawn from the analyses of text 1 can be of considerable value in the analyses of texts such as text 2, which exists (in written form as a record or as a prompt to memory) to be spoken or sung, and text 3, which is exclusively a spoken exchange, though that too, for the particular purposes of this book, is written out as text.

In undertaking these explorations I have been fortunate to have access to a corpus of spoken English, the CANCODE corpus (the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English), which is one of the largest of its type in the world. The details of this corpus are described in more detail in chapter 4. The main purpose of its compilation has been to provide a research resource from which better understandings of the differences between spoken and written English could be obtained in order to develop better-grounded materials for the teaching of English grammar and vocabulary. Yet, as this work has progressed, one salient and striking feature of the corpus samples appearing daily on my computer screen has been the frequency with which examples similar to that of text 3 are observed.

The following week

The following week, back at the office and having decided that these issues must wait until more data can be assembled, I was working on specific aspects of spoken grammar as part of a chapter of a new grammar of English for

Cambridge University Press (Carter and McCarthy, forthcoming). I was using the CANCODE corpus of spoken English and was scrolling through several screens of corpus data looking for examples. My attention became drawn to a particular sequence in a conversational exchange between flatmates. The contextual background to this corpus data is as follows.

[Four friends are meeting at <S 02>'s house. Following on from a prolonged stretch of casual conversation, <S 02> diverts the attention to some DIY task. Two of the friends are attempting to drill a hole in a wall in order to put up shelves: <S 01> secretary: female (31); <S 02> scientist: female (31); <S 03> unemployed: female (28); <S 04> production chemist: male (29); <S 03> and <S 04> are partners.]

<S 03>: Have you finished screwing it in then?
<S 02>: [laughs] Well no. [unintelligible]
<S 03>: [unintelligible] again.
<S 02>: We've all had a go.
<S 04>: Yeah. Go on you have a go.
<S 03>: It's quite hard.
<S 02>: It's it's getting there. You can do alternate turns but then your wrist starts to hurt.
<S 03>: Mm.
[laughter]
[unintelligible]
<S 01>: It's cos you can't get a foot in. If you could get a decent er lean on it.
<S 03>: It doesn't happen fast enough for me.
[unintelligible]
<S 03>: Ah. I can't move that at all. Am I exceptionally weak and crap?
<S 01>: Yeah. It was just an exceptionally large screw for a small hole I think.
<S 02>: Oh dear. I wouldn't wanna do that.
[laughter]
<S 02>: I'll heave it.
<S 01>: It's not moving at all Margaret.
[unintelligible]
<S 03>: We'll put this [unintelligible] away now and never touch it again.
[laughter]

As my attention gradually shifted from the grammatical properties to the creative properties of language, I began to consider questions about the ways in which language was being used and how far the examples did or did not correspond with the examples provided on that misty day the previous week. I began to consider the extent to which the exchange might be regarded as 'literary', not least because of the way figures of speech and wordplay normally considered to be the preserve of written, literary discourse were appearing

with a particular density. I began to consider the functions and purposes to which such language was being put. I asked to what extent it was a reflex of the context (a group of friends), or of the subject matter (DIY or *do-it-yourself* home maintenance), a discourse containing many words with tendencies towards sexual puns and scatological humour, of which the word 'screw' is the most common example. I questioned to what extent the creativity serves to establish solidarity in the group, and whether the creativity in a mixed group such as this is in any way marked by the gender of the speakers. I also began to consider whether there are material differences in the way in which creativity operates in this extract of spoken English when compared with the more standard instances of written creative language which I was more accustomed to studying.

The exchange also inverts common assumptions that language use is wholly for ideational reference and for 'purposeful' transactional communication. The participants here are creating an alternative reality in which, albeit momentarily, representation takes over from reference. The event does not lead to increased knowledge on the part of the participants and the point of the exchange is not necessarily to prompt action or to transfer information. The laughter and obvious pleasure derived by the group as a result of the wordplay is sufficient justification for the exchange. And, in contrast, the extract also reminded me how often this kind of sexual wordplay and banter can also be used for competitive purposes, for purposes of insult or to put someone down. Although I do not believe that to be the case here, creativity with language does not always function for collaborative purposes.

I began to ask more questions and, in particular, to search for further instances in the corpus. As the corpus grew to 5 million words in total, I began to see ever more instances in a wider range of discourse contexts. I began to conclude that creativity is a pervasive feature of spoken language exchanges as well as a key component in interpersonal communication, and that it is a property actively possessed by all speakers and listeners; it is not simply the domain of a few creatively gifted individuals.

But is it creativity? More questions

Further searches in more data led to further questions. The searches revealed the complex nature of the topic of creativity, pointing to a need to question pretty fundamentally what exactly it means when a stretch of language is described as creative.

The following example from a conversational extract from the CANCODE corpus further prompts some of these questions about the precise nature of creative features of spoken language use. Chief among these features are examples of the repetition already noted above, but there are also other features to note.

[Extract from a conversation involving three art college students. The students are all female, are the same age (between 20 and 21) and share a house in Wales. Two of the

students (<S 01> and <S 03>) are from the south-west of England and one (<S 02>) is from South Wales. They are having tea at home on a Sunday.]

<S 03>: I like Sunday nights for some reason. [laughs] I don't know why.
<S 02>: [laughs] Cos you come home.
<S 03>: I come home+
<S 02>: You come home to us.
<S 03>: +and pig out.
<S 02>: Yeah yeah.
<S 03>: Sunday is a really nice day I think.
<S 02>: It certainly is.
<S 03>: It's a really nice relaxing day.
<S 02>: It's me earring.
<S 03>: Oh lovely oh lovely.
<S 02>: It's fallen apart a bit. But
<S 03>: It looks quite nice like that actually. I like that. I bet, is that supposed to be straight?
<S 02>: Yeah.
<S 03>: I reckon it looks better like that.
<S 02>: And it was another bit as well, was another dangly bit.
<S 03>: What . . . attached to+
<S 02>: The top bit.
<S 03>: +that one.
<S 02>: Yeah. So it was even.
<S 01>: Mobile earrings.
<S 03>: I like it like that. It looks better like that.
<S 02>: Oh what did I see. What did I see. Stained glass. There w=, I went to a craft fair.
<S 01>: Mm.
<S 02>: C=, erm in Bristol. And erm, I know. [laughs] I went to a craft fair in Bristol and they had erm this stained glass stall and it was all mobiles made out of stained glass.
<S 03>: Oh wow.
<S 02>: And they were superb, they were. And the mirrors with all different colours, like going round in the colour colour wheel. But all different size bits of coloured glass on it.
<S 03>: Oh wow.
<S 02>: It was superb. Massive.

(See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the symbols used in this book for the transcription of speech extracts.)

According to Deborah Tannen in her book on everyday talk *Talking Voices*, repetition is a key component in what she terms the 'poetry' of talk. 'Repetition is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world. It is the central linguistic meaning-making strategy, a limitless

resource for individual creativity and interpersonal involvement' (Tannen, 1989: ch. 3). For example, key exchanges in the extract (numbered 1–3 below) involve linguistic repetition across speaking turns. But, as will be seen, the repetition is not simply an echo of the previous speaker. The forms include both verbatim phrasal and clausal repetition, and repetition with variation (for example, the addition of the word 'relaxing' in extract 2). This patterning with variation includes both lexical and grammatical repetition (the repetition of the word *bit* or *like* – in its different grammatical realisations as verb and preposition – as well as repetition of the determiner *that* in extract 3). It includes pronominal repetition with variation '*I* come home/*you* come home' (extract 1) and phonological repetition with variation (for example, *bit/better* in extract 3). Repetition is evident here in varied linguistic ways and it may not be stretching things too far to say that in the forms which are created here there is indeed a poetry of talk.

Extract 1

<*S 02*>: [laughs] cos you come home.
<*S 03*>: I come home.
<*S 02*>: You come home to us.

Extract 2

<*S 03*>: Sunday is a really nice day I think.
<*S 02*>: It certainly is.
<*S 03*>: It's a really nice relaxing day.

Extract 3

<*S 03*>: I reckon it looks better like that.
<*S 02*>: And it was another bit as well, was another dangly bit.
<*S 03*>: What . . . attached to+
<*S 02*>: The top bit.
<*S 03*>: +that one.
<*S 02*>: Yeah. So it was even.
<*S 01*>: Mobile earrings.
<*S 03*>: I like it like that. It looks better like that.
<*S 02*>: Oh what did I see. What did I see. Stained glass. There w=, I went to a craft fair.
<*S 01*>: Mm.

But on their own the forms only take us so far. The main creative functions seem to be in the dialogic building of a relationship of accord between the speakers, the extensive repetition here creating what might be termed an affective convergence or commonality of viewpoint. These relationship-reinforcing worlds are created in other ways too: for example, by means of

backchannelling, e.g. *Oh lovely, oh lovely*; *yeah, yeah*; by means of interpersonal grammatical forms such as tails . . . *They were superb, they were*; and by means of affective exclamatives *Oh wow*. The exchanges are also impregnated with vague and hedged language forms (for example, *fallen apart a bit*, *the top bit*, *I reckon*), and a range of evaluative and attitudinal expressions (often juxtaposed with much laughter) which further support and creatively adapt to the informality, intimacy and solidarity established between the three speakers.

I noted above, however, an expectation that when the word 'creative' is employed it entails uses which are marked out as striking and innovative. Conventionally, this involves a marked breaking or bending of rules and norms of language, including a deliberate play with its forms and its potential for meaning. Such a use occurs in the above exchange towards the end of the extract, as the topic switches to discussions of the earrings worn by one of the girls. The earrings are 'dangly' rather than fixed and clearly move all over the place as she talks. They are also large and bright. The word *mobile* is metaphorically linked with the word 'earrings'. There is a pun on the meaning of 'mobile' (with its meaning of movement) and the fixture of a *mobile* – meaning either a brightly coloured dangling object which is often placed over a child's bed or cot to provide distraction or entertainment, or else a piece of moving art.

This usage is a more conventional instance of linguistic creativity involving changes in, to and with the language. It also seems on the surface to be of a different order to the repetitions and echoes noted above. To what extent is this kind of creativity different from the echoes and repetitions created by the girlfriends? If it is different, how and why is it different and is it differently valued? And, to adapt the subtitle of this book, is it or is any of it art?

Yet more questions

The extent of the evidence for the existence of creativity in daily spoken communicative exchanges and interactions has become compelling, and over the past few years I have returned many times to that happenstantial day at that airport and to the examples I encountered there of common language uses in everyday communication. And I have continued to explore and excavate, asking, among other questions: why creativity is conventionally seen largely as a written phenomenon; how spoken and written creativity differ; what their respective purposes are; whether speakers are conscious or unconscious of what they do; whether there are degrees of creativity, with some instances to be more highly valued than others; how and why creativity in common speech often seems to be connected with the construction of a relationship and of interpersonal convergence; whether spoken creativity is confined to particular sociocultural contexts and to particular kinds of relationship; what the implications are for our understanding of creativity when something is planned and worked over several times (the *no queue* advertisement), when folk memory and multiple rehearsals affect the spoken performance (the nursery rhyme) and when the discourse is largely spontaneous, unplanned and improvised chat

(the Bristol landlord discussion and the art students casually talking on a Sunday afternoon).

As examples from the CANCODE data have multiplied, so have yet more questions about the nature of the data and the extent to which the many types and forms of these data can be termed creative. Throughout these early investigations what continued to strike me, and still does strike me most forcibly, is the fact that patterns and forms of language which as a student of literature I had readily classified as poetic or literary can be seen to be regularly occurring in everyday conversational exchanges.

The mere existence of such features does not, however, make the exchanges 'literary' or creative. Nor can we automatically infer that the speakers themselves are being creative or that they think of themselves as creative, though in the examples given so far the participants are clearly doing more than simply transacting information or simply socially interacting. Do we not expect there to be much more evidence of new coinages and linguistic inventions, and at the least language use which is strikingly different from the ordinary which prompts us to see things in new ways, layering in the memory and providing pleasure at the moment of use and upon recall? Can creativity be at the same time both an exceptional and an ubiquitous phenomenon? Is it art or artful or both? Can it be both? And, if creativity is pervasive in everyday language and life, is everybody creative to the same degree? Are some people more creative than others? And, in terms of methodology, how much does the analyst notice which the participants do not and vice versa? If some creative patterns such as repetition and echoing are claimed to be more below the level of conscious awareness, then what is the nature of the evidence which the analyst offers?

So, what exactly does constitute creativity in this type of language use? The Sunday afternoon example involving the art college students shows in varying degrees the creation of mutuality and a creative use of words and patterns in speech. Are such features to be seen in terms of social purposes and functions? Can they be explained wholly by means of linguistic analysis? Given the extent of work on the psychology of creativity and on creativity as a psychological phenomenon, is it best to define such uses of language with reference to psycholinguistic paradigms, as an aspect of a poetics of mind? And then, from a perspective of a cultural history of word meaning, how stable is the word 'creative'? Does it vary over time and culture or are there continuities in the meaning of the word which will help in the discussion of the kinds of forms and uses seen so widely in the samples collected?

Most importantly, for me, what part does social context play in these processes? For example, how significant is the context of friendship, membership of a cultural group, a father–daughter contact, the identity of an individual in relation to other individuals? On the above evidence creativity is clearly contextually framed and conditioned. What does this mean for our discussion?

Why this book and what is its main point?

As I researched further I discovered innumerable books on creativity, in particular in the context of written, especially literary, text but found that very little had been written on *spoken creativity*. What explorations of the language of spoken creativity there are have been limited by the particular preoccupations and research paradigms of linguistics in the twentieth century. Although a rich body of work exists in the fields of ethnolinguistics and poetics and in work on language and anthropology, many descriptive frameworks are modelled on the basis of written rather than spoken examples.

In some traditions, too, the preoccupation with invented sentences and the testing of such sentences for grammaticality has not helped investigation of data which are naturally occurring, which go beyond the level of the individual sentence, and which contain many of the features of spoken performance such as slips of the tongue, false starts, hesitations, pauses, interruptions and the like. Such features are inevitably not to be found when tidied up and anaesthetised examples are the basis for analysis, and when referential and ideational uses of language are privileged over affective, interpersonal and emotive uses. Although there are cultural conventions in contemporary Western societies which do not assign positive value to emotions, it is perhaps still surprising that the interpersonal and emotive features which are most marked in spoken data have not been subjected to extensive analysis.

Of course, such preoccupations and research paradigms have to a considerable degree been occasioned by the limitations of available audio-recording technology and, as we have seen, this situation is changing rapidly. Similarly, the development of computer-assisted corpus linguistics, which embraces analysis of extensive quantities of language, facilitates the analysis both of stretches of text and of predominant patterns within such texts, including examples of 'common talk'. At the same time, however, the development of new frameworks for the analysis of spoken language and of the widespread creativity within such examples is needed. I have thus come to the topic inspired by what I began to see in the corpus, but with broad research questions rather than narrow hypotheses to investigate.

The main point of the book is to explore creativity in everyday spoken English. In doing this I look closely at the kinds of examples given in this introduction, believing that it is time to describe such data more closely and in the conviction that creativity is not the exclusive preserve of the individual genius, that, fundamentally, creativity is also a matter of dialogue with others and that the social and cultural contexts for creative language use need to be more fully emphasised. In this book I try to take some steps in this direction, although it is new and complex territory and there will be and have been times when I wish I had not encountered that provocative cluster of examples on that (symbolically) misty autumnal day.

The organisation of the book

The prologue at the start of chapter 1 focuses on the notion of common talk and the values which surround it, providing in the process a focus for the core questions raised in this introduction. Chapters 1 and 2 review a range of research paradigms for the study of creativity, beginning with a review of work in the discipline of psychology. The aim is to explore what different disciplines make and have made of the subject, and to see what work from other disciplines may have to offer to linguistic approaches to the topic. Existing studies of creativity as a linguistic phenomenon focus mainly on written artefacts, produced by individuals whose creative processes mark them out as uniquely inspired. With some exceptions, existing research paradigms, while often insightful and revealing, do not offer many frameworks for the analysis of creative spoken language in general, of interpersonal creativity, or of creativity as a phenomenon of daily demotic social exchanges. Studies which do offer help with theorisation of everyday creativity include: research into the cultural variability of creativity, especially in non-Western, non-individualist cultures; research into language play; research into literariness as a cline or gradient of creative language use. All these studies are reviewed and evaluated in the light of some of the main questions raised in this introduction. But, overall, it is to the studies with a more social or discoursal orientation that I turn, as the main theoretical ground is laid.

Chapters 3 and 4 set out the main issues and questions which are raised by the data in the CANCODE corpus. These chapters combine practical analysis and theoretical debate. They offer further descriptions and analysis of the main patterns found in the data, with a particular focus on parts of speech and on patterns of repetition and echoing brought about in the process of affective, interpersonal exchanges. A whole set of figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, idiom, and hyperbole are discussed in the context of the everyday discourses in which they most commonly occur. The existence of such patterns forces upon us key questions which impact both on linguistic and on literary-aesthetic theory.

Chapter 5 describes the main corpus of spoken data on which many of the examples for the book are based. The organisation of the corpus, the procedures for data collection, the ways in which the data are organised generically, are discussed and evaluated. Analysis across the contextually shaped organisation of the CANCODE corpus also reveals further that creativity is to be located in a wide range of everyday communications, that it is closely linked to humour and wordplay, that it involves affective and interpersonal language choices, and that it occurs more markedly in certain social contexts than others. A wide range of data is drawn on in this chapter, including business meetings, intimate family exchanges, professional colleagues socialising, journalists at work and informal conversations in general.

Chapter 6 returns to theories of verbal play, to notions of literary language and to sociopsychological formulations, but the emphasis is on creativity in a range of social and cultural practices, including workplace discourse involving

professional and client relations. The main argument is repeated here that creativity in spoken language involves both the creation of alternative realities and the reinforcement of existing realities, and involves some revision of the standard ways of seeing creativity. Examples in this chapter extend beyond those drawn from the CANCODE corpus to include examples of email and Internet communication, counselling and therapeutic discourse, the discourse of adolescents and of university tutorials, reinforcing throughout the importance of a view of creativity as a sociocultural process.

This chapter also looks at the kinds of blends which occur in many contemporary discoursal forms such as email, chat-lines and media 'performances', pointing out that many are more speech-based than has been assumed and that much of the pervasive creativity in such contexts is due to a blending of discourses. Monolingual, bi- and multilingual exchanges are examined. Chapter 6 also contains data in which speakers cross over between languages, exploiting patterns in more than one language, sometimes simultaneously, for creative effect. The main conclusion drawn in chapters 5 and 6 is that, while psychological explanations are helpful and necessary, spoken creativity also needs to be understood, with evidence from a wide range of texts and practices, as a fundamentally social phenomenon and as socioculturally mediated. It is important to engage not simply with creativity as an individual, decontextualised phenomenon but with creativity in context and as an emergent function of dialogue.

The epilogue, embedded within chapter 6, raises questions for further research in the area of pedagogies for language, literature and discourse study, the fostering of creativity, and the interfaces between linguistic, literary and social theory, all areas in which I have invested much thinking over the years and which are now being challenged by engagement with corpus linguistics and with the theory and practice of creativity. The chapter argues for closer links between theories of creativity, the classroom and the nature of pedagogy as pattern forming and pattern-transforming linguistic practice.

Throughout the book the data cited include two- and multiparty talk and exhibit a range of relationships ranging from informal to formal contexts, from symmetrical to asymmetrical encounters and from transactional to non-transactional exchanges. Throughout the book the ubiquity of creative language is underlined. In highlighting its uniqueness, however, the book demonstrates, perhaps paradoxically, the normality and commonality of creativity in everyday communication.

So the main theme of the book is that creativity is an all-pervasive feature of everyday language. And, as I shall say more than once, linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people.

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