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WORD-FORMATION PROCESSES IN THE FANDOM JARGON

The phenomenon of fandom seems to be present in various forms of entertainment from books and films to games. Hundreds of millions of people visiting a singular website dealing with only one form of fandom production supports this statement. However, it is not only the matter of being a fan, but also a member of community with its own culture and language. Because of this, a look into the characteristics of the language can only be a step towards the understanding of culture. Therefore, this paper deals with the fandom jargon, but from a morphological point of view. More precisely, a corpus of 33 words was analysed in terms of word-formation processes employed and this led to some conclusions regarding the productivity of word-formation processes and tendencies in the innovative use of language.

Keywords: fandom; jargon; fanfiction; word-formation processes; productivity; online discourse

1. INTRODUCTION

Fandom or "a group of fans of someone or something" ("Fandom" 2020) is a phenomenon more complex than its definition. One of the aspects that accounts for its complexity is the language used by members of fandoms. Fandom language, due to its complexity, systematic organisation and applicability in this limited sphere of human experience, can be considered a jargon, even though defining jargon is a complex task. Bugarski (2003) points to the multiplicity of meaning that the term jargon carries, but in broad terms defines it as a variety of language used for

communication and identification of a particular group of people (p. 9). He also divides jargon into three groups, the professional, subcultural and youth jargon. Given this definition and classification, fandom language can be seen as a subcultural jargon of fandom.

Members of fandoms use words and expressions that are undecipherable to those outside the limited group of people interested in a fandom, and such limited use is also characteristic of subcultural jargons (Bugarski 2003). Similarly, Schechner (1995), even though writing about the academic jargon, points to jargon being a way of keeping readers uncertain about the actual meaning of what is said. These claims coincide with Herzog's (2013) claims, in her work on agency of fanfiction jargon, thatthe distinction between those who can understand what is said and those who cannot is purposely made to divide between the members of fandom, i.e. fans, and non-fans. Only those familiar with the jargon are able to consume the created content.

The fandom content can be found in several forms, for example, fan videos, posts on social media and the already mentioned fanfiction. Fanfiction is a creative outlet for many fans, since they create new stories based on the original "anime/manga, books, cartoons, comics, games, music, movies, plays/musicals, TV shows" (Yin, Aragon, Evans, Davis 2017: 6108). These stories are then shared with the rest of the community on websites specifically created for sharing fanfiction, for example, FanFiction.Net. This website, according to SimilarWeb's data from November 2019, had been visited 137.82 million times in the previous six months. Additionally, this and other similar websites are not only a place for sharing works, but also a place for expressing mutual interests and supporting each other's ideas, thus creating a communal spirit. In order to preserve the spirit, this community is closed for those not belonging to it, and jargon could be a way of reinforcing the separation.

The fandom jargon was created by fans themselves through constant need to express their ideas and opinions about particular fandoms. Different techniques were used to create words suitable for discussing fandom topics. Morphology as one of the fundamental disciplines of linguistics can help account for those techniques and name the processes that occurred. The aim of this paper is to look at some of the most commonly used words and expressions in the fandom jargon and detect which word-formation processes were used in the creation of the same. Additionally, it looks into which of those processes are more or less productive, in order to uncover which word-formation process is (un)intentionally favoured by the fans.

2. WORD-FORMATION PROCESSES AND PRODUCTIVITY

Language is in constant movement and allows for changes to occur, however, not without any governing principles. Existence of certain principles is visible in all disciplines of language, but for the purpose of this research, morphology is of interest. Morphology deals with words and also their change, which can occur in some limited ways. This proves that language is restricted in some ways, but with the aim of preserving its structure and preventing a collapse. Nevertheless, a change in language, in terms of words, does occur and is limited to open classes of words, because closed classes do not allow for introduction of new forms as easily or even at all. The open classes are expanded through the use of word-formation (Booij 2007).

English language allows for word-formation to occur in several different ways and those ways can be referred to as word-formation processes. Many authors have written on this topic and created overviews of these processes, providing different taxonomies. The taxonomy which is used in this research is common to many authors (Bauer 1983; Booij 2007; Plag 2003; Raja 2014). However, to create a brief overview of the processes, this paper uses Bauer's work (1983) as the base, due to its clear taxonomical presentation, with slight amandments from the works of other more recent authors. The brief overview includes the following word-formation processes.

2.1. Compunding

Compounding is a process of creating words in which two words of same or different word class are joined together to create a new word, written together, separately or with a hyphen. Majority of the created words are nouns, but based on the word class of the created lexemes, compound can be divided into: compound nouns (e.g. sunshine), compound verbs (e.g. sky-dive), compound adjective (e.g. childproof), compound adverbs (e.g. over-night), other form classes (e.g. somebody), rhyme motivated compounds (e.g. hobnob), and ablaut-motivated compounds (e.g. tick-tock) (Bauer 1983: 201-216).

2.2. Affixation

Words are created through affixation by adding affix, a bound morpheme, to the root morpheme. Root morphemes can, after the addition of affix, change the word class, but it does not have to be the case. Two major types of affixation are prefixation and

suffixation. Prefixation is achieved by adding the affix before the root (e.g. enslave), while suffixation is achieved by adding the affix after the root (e.g. kingdom) (Bauer 1983: 217-225). Plag (2003) provides a comprehensive list of both suffixes and prefixes (86-104).

2.3. Conversion

Conversion occurs when a word changes its class but not the form (e.g. a sign > to sign). There are debates over whether this occurrence is the matter of morphology or syntax (Bauer 1983: 226-229). This work treats it as a word-formation process.

2.4. Back-formation

In the process of back-formation, suffixes of an already existing word are deleted to create a new word suitable for a use different from the original word (e.g. editor > edit) (Bauer 1983: 230).

2.5. Clipping

For the clipping to occur, a lexeme needs to be shortened (e.g. mike > microphone). In some subdivisions this word-formation process would be listed as one of the unpredictable formations, since there is no particular pattern which is followed in the process of clipping (Bauer 1983: 233).

2.6. Blending

Blends are created by combining two or possibly more parts of other words (e.g. shoat > sheep + goat). This word-formation process could be also considered as an unpredictable, because there is not a clear pattern of combining parts or to the consequent analysis into morphs (Bauer 1983: 234).

2.7. Acronyms

Acronyms are words that are constructed through the use of initial letters of words in phrases (e.g. VAT > Value Added Tax). For a word to be considered an acronym it has to have its own pronunciation, different from just pronouncing individual letters

(Bauer 1983: 237-239). In addition, Plag (2003: 126-129) creates a distinction between acronyms and abbreviations. Plag's definition of acronyms is not different from the one already mentioned, but he categorises those words which are pronounced as individual letters as abbreviations (e.g. Bachelor of Arts > BA).

All of the mentioned word-formation processes play a role in the process of extending the vocabulary of English language, but not all of them contribute the same amount. This phenomenon is called productivity, and hence, there can be productive and unproductive morphological patterns. Booij (2007: 68) describes it in this way:

> "When we call a morphological pattern productive, we mean that this pattern can be extended to new cases, can be used to form new words. When we say that a morphological pattern is unproductive, this means that it is not used for coining new words".

However, it does not always have to be the matter of producing or not producing new words, rather it can be the issue of the amount produced and its use.

Therefore, there are qualitative and quantitative approaches to productivity, and they are related, since any possible creation of words can be quantified (Plag 1999). This further leads to different ways of accounting for productivity of a word-formation process. Quantitative approaches determine the frequency of application of a process; while qualitative approaches include additional factors that influence the creation of new words (Fernández-Domínguez 2013). The additional factors relate to both prevention of formation of words and motivation for production. Prćić (1999) discusses both sides of the process, but also clearly mentions that motivation is a crucial factor. There must exist a need for a term to be created and a concept which it is to name, for the word-formation to occur.

As a result of different approaches to productivity, there are different models of measuring it. One of the models is the type frequency model which counts words created as a result of application of a word-formation process, and the process which creates more words is more productive. This model is the simplest of all, but it creates the basis for application of any other model. Additionally, this type of adding up words created by a word-formation process accounts for the profitability of the process, which is the use of created word, an aspect of productivity (Fernández-Domínguez 2013). Given that this research attempts to make a first step in the direction of exploring fandom jargon and the word-formation processes present, it only relies on the type frequency model.

3. METHODOLOGY

Since the research tries to uncover the word-formation processes used in the production of fandom jargon, it was first necessary to determine how broad an exploration would be conducted. It was impossible to cover the entire vocabulary of the fandom jargon, especially since particular fandom groups create even more specified vocabulary related to their particular interest. Therefore, this study was focused solely on general fandom vocabulary.

An article posted online, with the tittle *Canon, fanon, shipping and more: a glossary of the tricky terminology that makes up fan culture* (Romano 2016), was used as a source for the basic, most common, fandom vocabulary which was to be analysed in the study. Romano states that she wrote the article as a way of providing basic terminology needed for understanding fandom talk, but also includes some of the relevant issues in the fandom community. The article comprised four parts, but this research covers the terminology from the following sections of Romano's article (2016): "Part 1: What even is "fandom"?", "Part 2: Basic fandom concepts", "Ship subclassifications", and "The different types of fanfiction". Other sections are not covered, since they deal with issues specific to fandoms. The used sections provided the total of 33 fandom related terms.

The chosen terms were taken from the article and with the help of the meaning provided by the author were then classified according to the word-formation process used for creation. In this way, it could be seen which word-formation processes had higher frequency of use and were, therefore, preferred by the fandom communities. With the categorization conducted, the type productivity of word-formation processes became visible.

4. WORD-FORMATION PROCESSES PRESENT IN THE VOCABULARY OF FANDOM

Fandom jargon studied for the purpose of this research proved to be a versatile one when it comes to word-formation, since out of seven presented word-formation processes six were used to create the 33 words taken into consideration. These words were divided into categories according to the word-formation processes involved and their analysis is presented. The only word-formation process that was not detected in any of the examples was back-formation and, therefore, it is not present in this section.

However, it cannot be deemed as unproductive in the fandom jargon, since there are words and expressions which this paper did not include. There could be instances of words created through back-formation outside the analysed article. Additionally, there were words and expressions that could not fit into any of the categories, and for them a category called miscellaneous was formed.

Figure 1

The type productivity of word-formation processes in the fandom jargon
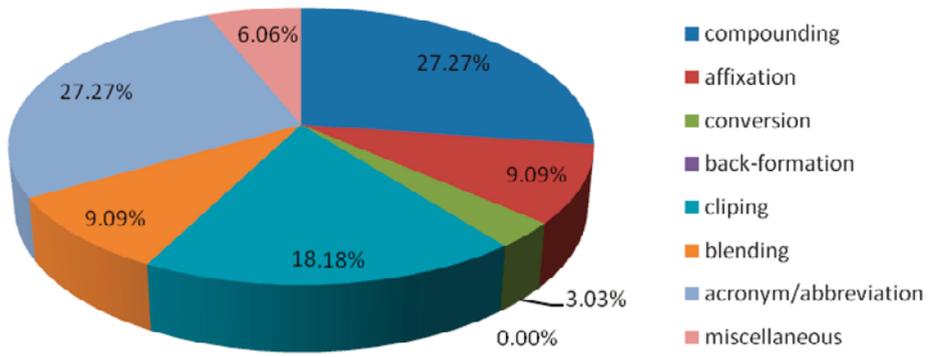
4.1. Compounding

Compounding is among the two most productive word-formation processes with nine words (27.27 %) created through the use of it. They are the following ones:
   a) *canonfic (n.)* – created through the pattern *noun + noun, canon + fic* (clipping of fanfiction), and stands for fanfiction written based on the canonical story.
   b) *crossover fic (n.)* – the noun + noun combination, *crossover + fic,* and stands for a type of fanfiction that combines characters and stories of, for example, two different books.
   c) *fancast (v.)* – *noun + verb* combination of *fan* and cast. It stands for creation of fanfiction where fans recast the actors for the roles.
   d) *fanfiction (n.)* – combines *noun + noun, fan + fiction,* and stands for a fictional piece of writing based on an already existing source or even real event/people.
   e) *fanworks (n.)* – *noun + noun* combination, *fan + work,* which isany type of creation, fanfiction, fan videos, images, made as a sign of appreciation for a particular canonical work.

f) *genderbend (v.)* – combination *noun + verb, gender + bend,* which means a process of creatingfanfiction that changes the gender of the characters in the canon.

g) *headcanon (n.)* – follows the pattern of *noun + noun, head + canon,* and it names a branch of fanon which is actually an idea of a fan, not related to canonical work, and exists in the mind/head of the fan.

h) *ship war (n)* – *noun + noun* combination of words *ship and war,* and it stands for differences in opinion of what pairings should be present in the fandom.

i) *racebend (v.)* – *noun + verb* combination, *race + bend,* which creates a type of fanfiction where the race of the characters of the canonical work is changed.

4.2. Affixation

The productivity of affixation as a word-formation process is not negligible. There are three examples (9.09%) of this process and all three formed words were achieved through suffixation. The words are:

a) *fandom (n.)* – created by combining root *fan* and the suffix *–dom*. Romano (2016) defines it as "a community of fans."

b) *fannish (adj.)* – the combination of root *fan,* where the doubling of the final letter occurs, and the suffix *–ish*. This adjective describes anything that is in relation with fandom.

c) *shipper (n.)* – combines the root *ship,* with the doubled final letter, and the suffix *–er*. This noun stands for any person, fan, who supports a particular pairing.

4.3. Conversion

There is only one word (3.03%) in the analysed article created through the process of conversion and that is:

a) *to ship (v.)* – converted from the noun *ship* and carries the meaning of supporting a pairing or wanting for two people to be a pair.

4.4. Clipping

Clipping is the second largest category of words with six terms (18.18%) created in this manner. It contains the following:

a) *canon (n.)* – created by shortening the adjective *canonical.* It stands for all original works that are used as inspiration for fanworks. However, it has to be stated that the word *canon,* with a different meaning, is an established one and it cannot be claimed that it was created by fans as a part of fandom jargon.

b) *fanfic (n.)* – came to being by clipping the noun *fanfiction* and carries the same meaning as the original noun.

c) *fic(n.)* – identical case to the previous one, just the clipping was done on both sides of the noun *fanfiction.* Additional clipping did not alter the meaning.

d) *gen (n.)* – created by clipping of the adjective *general* and names a type of fanfiction where romance is not at the forefront.

e) *het (n.)* - formed by clipping of the adjective *heterosexual.* This word is used to name a type of ship subclassification, which involves female/male pairing.

f) *ship (n.)* – this is technically a suffix that remained after the clipping of the word relationship. It seems that a process opposite of back-formation occurred. This clipping turned a suffix into a root used to create other fandom related terms. Ship stands for a pairing, or the relationship for which the fans are rooting.

4.5. Blending

When it comes to the productivity, blending has the same number of formed words as affixation. However, this paper and the article used as the source of examples do not account for a very specific phenomenon of use of blending in creating joint names for pairings. DiGoralmo (2012), in her paper The Fandom Pairing Name: Blends and the Phonology-Orthography Interface, discusses this phenomenon in detail and accounts for its specificities. The examples analysed in this paper are:

a) *fanon (n.)* – this is a blend of words *fan* and *canon.* The term stands for the ideas of fans that are not canonical.

b) *femslash (n.)* – created through blending of words *female* and *slash.* It is a term that stands for a female/female pairing.

c) *Genfic (n.)* – a blend between *general* and *fanfic.* It stands for the same as previously analysed type of fanfiction gen.

4.6. Acronym/Abbreviation

As explained in the section on word-formation, there is a difference between acronyms and abbreviations, but in this paper they are considered as one joint

category. The reasoning behind it is the issue of the article, which is the source for fandom jargon, not providing pronunciation of the terms. Therefore, it was impossible to determine whether they are pronounced as individual letters, abbreviations, or as a word, acronyms. There were nine words (27.27%) that can be categorised as acronyms or abbreviations, and they are the following:

a) *AU (n.)* – stands for *alternative universe* and is a type of fanfiction that takes characters of original works and puts them into a new context.
b) *BNF (n.)* – stands for *big name fan* and is a famous person that is a part of a particular fandom.
c) *OTP (n.)* – stands for *one true pairing* and represents the one pairing that a fan supports more than any other.
d) *OT3/OT4 (n.)* – stands for *one true threesome/foursome* and refers to a polyamorous relationship that a fan supports.
e) *PWP (n.)* – stands for *Plot? What plot? or porn without plot.* This term names a type of fanfiction which more deals with sexual content than any other aspect.
f) *RPF (n.)* – stands for *real person fiction* and is a name for pairings or stories about real people, not fictional characters.
g) *RPS (n.)* – stands for *real person slash* and refers to a same-sex pairings of real people.
h) *TPTB (n.)* – stands for *the powers that be,* or the people who have power over the canonical work, so they are the writers, creators, producers.
i) *WIP (n.)* – stands for *work in progress* and is a type of fanfiction that is written in parts, and also posted online in that manner.

4.7. Miscellaneous

The need for creating a category of words that do not fit into any of the mentioned categories arose, since the creation of some terms could not be explained by word-formation. Two words (6.06%) were categorised as miscellaneous and they are the following:

a) *Mary Sue or Gary Stu* (n.) – a coordination of two proper nouns that actually signify "an original self-inserted character" (Romano 2016). The analysis of word-formation is not applicable to this example.
b) *slash (n.)* – stands for a subgenre of fanfiction in which the main focus are male/male pairings. The name came from the slash that is used between male and male. Since slash is a noun and the name of the pairing, i.e. slash, is a

noun, and there is no addition or subtraction of elements, morphemes, there seems to be no adequate word-formation process to explain the creation of this word. The only change is in the referent and, therefore, the meaning, which is the matter of semantics.

5. DISCUSSION

Fandom jargon has shown to be quite interesting for the morphological analysis, at least when it comes to the examples used, due to the variety of word-formation processes that were present. With the exception of back-formations, all of the processes commonly present in morphology literature were also present in the fandom jargon. Though present, it is not the case that all word-formation processes made equal contribution to the creation of fandom jargon. However, even this inequality in distribution created some patterns that are worth mentioning and comparing to already existing research.

There seems to be a preference in the use of those word-formation processes that create shorter word forms, clipping with six examples and abbreviations/acronyms with nine examples support this claim. Additionally, blending can be added to this category of words created through shortening, with its three examples and with the phenomenon of blending names. In total, there were 18 instances (54.54%) of words being created by some sort of shortening of other words or even complex phrases. This is indicative of need to communicate in a quick and brief manner. Possibly, the members of fandoms need a faster way of transmitting ideas and that would explain the tendency to use the shortest forms possible. Such tendency is not unforeseen, since this community conducts its communication online, via websites and social media. Thus, previous research on online discourse, Netspeak, coincides with this tendency. Netspeak is a sort of a language that carries features specific of Internet mediated communication, and it refers both to written a spoken communication (Crystal 2006). Crystal (2006) presents it having features of conciseness, usage of abbreviated forms, blending, and similar other.

However, the fact that, in the corpus of this research, compounding created the same amount of words as clipping, nine words each, seems contradictory to what was stated before. Compounding as a word-formation process functions on the principle of combining elements without altering them and in that way it creates complex structures. In spite of this, it can be claimed that fandom jargon prefers shortened forms, because there are instances of those compound words having clipped

counterparts. For example, the name for the concept of fanfiction was created through compounding, but there are two clipped equivalents of it, fanfic and fic. Additionally, there are instances of use of clipped forms in creation of compounds. Ship war was created from a clipped word standing for pairing and a noun war.

Nevertheless, even compounds are shorter than using a whole phrase or a sentence in written or spoken online communication, which is consistent with the need for conciseness in communication. The written communication is more common in the online discourse according to Crystal (2006) and Hadžiahmetović Jurida et al. (2016), and as such strives for the swiftness of spoken communication. Some of the prominent morphological features in postponed communication noted by Hadžiahmetović Jurida et al. (2016) are the use of compounds, blends, short messages, word class conversion, etc. Furthermore, Herring (2011) identifies abbreviations (acronyms) as one of distinguishable characteristics of online written communication. The mentioned features are consistent with the findings of this research.

One has to bear in mind that this research into word-formation processes in the fandom jargon is a limited one. The scope of research was limited to only one article presenting vocabulary of fandom and that means to only 33 examples of fandom jargon. The present research is an attempt at initiating discussion on the topic of fandom jargon and its word-formation. Therefore, it would be useful to conduct this research on a larger scale to uncover more general morphological characteristic of fandom jargon. Furthermore, a research covering more instances of fandom jargon, but also the instances of use, would account for both qualitative and quantitative productivity of word-formation processes in this particular jargon.

6. CONCLUSION

The contemporary fan culture seems to be a world of its own and the exploration of it from a linguistic, more precisely, morphological perspective gave an insight into how the jargon specific to fandoms functions. Fandom jargon has concepts that are specific to a particular field and this paper dealt with word-formation processes used in the creation of terms naming those concepts. Compounding and abbreviations/acronyms, with nine instances of use each, can be considered as the most productive ones.

Additionally, there were some tendencies discovered during the analysis. Those are the tendencies of creating shorter forms, presumably in service of quicker communication, which would be consistent with previous findings on the use of

online discourse. Furthermore, the tendency of using already created terms for the construction of new ones was discovered. Therefore, shortening and circulation appear to be the main morphological tendencies of the fandom jargon.

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PROCESI TVORBE RIJEČI U FANDOM ŽARGONU

Sažetak:

Fandom fenomen je prisutan u raznim oblicima zabave počevši od knjiga i filmova, do igrica. Pokazatelj ovoga je činjenica da preko stotinu miliona ljudi posjećuju samo jednu od web stranica posvećenu jednom od oblika kreiranja fandom sadržaja. Nije suština samo biti fan (obožavatelj), u pitanju je i pripadnost zajednici koja ima svoju kulturu i jezik. Shodno tome, istraživanje jezika može voditi razumijevanju kulture. Upravo iz tog razloga, ovaj rad se bavi fandom žargonom, i to iz morfološke perspektive. Preciznije, izvršena je analiza tvorbe riječi na korpusu od 33 riječi. To je dovelo do zaključaka u vezi sa produktivnošću primjenjenih procesa tvorbe riječi i težnjama pri inovativnoj upotrebi jezika.

Ključne riječi: fandom; žargon; fan fikcija; tvorba riječi; produktivnost; online diskurs

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