English Zero Derivation Revisited: Nouning and Verbing in Online Business Articles

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Abstract

Zero derivation is a word-formation process when from a word in a certain lexical (sub)category by adding a zero derivational affix, but with allowed inflectional interventions, another, new lexeme is created, with absolutely same form (from a derivational point of view); similar, expanded meaning; and, most importantly, belonging to a different lexical (sub)category. The analytical structure of English makes this a very frequent, productive, and economic process, across almost all categories, with the *noun* to *verb* and the *verb* to *noun* directions marking the most common process formations. Yet, regardless of the direction, the newly formed, zero derived lexeme belongs to a different lexical (sub)category not only based on the same form but on the similar semantics that the old and the new lexemes share, due to the meaning transfer through cognition. Having seen that the process of zero derivation is present and widespread in everyday life, this paper aims at researching its presence and productivity in online business articles, that is, in online texts which discuss business topics. Online media have been chosen since its quest for timely information requires fast expression and, in such a need, quick word-formation processes, like zero derivation, are in place, making the expression formally short but semantically expanded. Therefore, it is the cognitive transfer of meaning that drives the process. Similar to the reason for selecting online media, business articles have been used as a corpus, to show what language is used when discussing non-language-centred topics, that is, business.

Keywords: online business articles, cognition, meaning transfer, nouns, verbs, zero-derivation