Some Problems of Word-Formation within the Framework of
a Generative Grammar

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Word-formation has not yet received due attention in
generative grammars, probably because it is an interim
problem between that of the more-or-less clearly establi-
shed morpho-phonological possibilities and the problem of
the lexicon, which has not yet been worked out (regarding
wordformation see the productive attempts of Chomsky, Wo
Worth, Motsch, Volotskaia, Zimmer).

My intention is to examine word-formation from a ge-
nerative approach, i.e. to trace the possibilities of ge-
nerating derivatives. I shall base my attempts on examples
drawn from word-formation in Hungarian, a language excep-
tionally rich in formative devices.

1. The first step is the separation of grammatical and
lexicological derivatives. This is necessary in order to
show what belongs to the lexicon and what does not. To ma -
ke this delimitation we can use a relatively simple trans-
formation: derivation (D) ——→ syntactic construction
(SC). Here the meaning of the stem (StM) and of the suf-
fix (SuM) is carried by different elements of the syn-
tactic construction, e.g. StM: predicate, word qualified

(by an adjective) and SuM: adverb, adjective.Its formula :

$$D \ (StM + SuM) \longrightarrow SC \ (StM \ and \ SuM)$$

If this transformation can be carried out, the deriva-
tive is grammatical; it does not belong to the lexicon.De-
rivatives of great semantic complexity have to be made
subject to a complementary and at the same time also con-
trolling transformation. (see my paper: La délimitation
de la dérivation lexicologique et grammaticale du hongrois
à l'aide de l'analyse transformationnelle. Caniers de lin-
guistique théorique et appliquée, Bucarest, 11, 1965).

2. The generating of grammatical or even of productive
lexicological derivatives can be carried out with relati-
ve ease in the manner in which N.Chomsky demonstrates ine
formation of, e.g., the past tense.Accordingly, the gene-
rating of the derivatives in question: <u>dob</u> 'throw' + fre-
quentative ⟶ <u>dobál</u> 'throw one after the other'.

And even if some difficult cases are to be found, they
can be resolved by applying a nominalization (or negation
etc.) transformation at the appropriate stage of derivat-
tion to the generalized Phrase-marker.

The productive grammatical or even lexicological deri-
vatives will not be entered in the lexicon (N.Chomsky: As-
pects of theory Theory of Syntax 184).

3. Derivational processes discussed before raise no se-
rious difficulties, for generative grammars.But there are
a lot of derivatives that create much more problems.Consi-

sider first of all the quasi-productive processes or the
great variety of sporadic, single cases. It is pretty dif-
ficult to find rules of any generality that produce deri-
vatives of such types. There are, however, some wide clas-
ses of cases with varying degrees of productivity which
require non-adhoc solutions. The solutions that can be achi-
eved are characteristic of derivation as a typical morpho-
semantical process.

The most difficult task is the generating of derivati-
ves of great lexicological and morphological complexity,
e.g. asztalos 'cabinet maker' (asztal 'table'+ -os: aszta-
los).

In the case of such words as asztalos one might seek
syntactic justification for a transformational analysis
from an underlying construction so that "he is a table
maker" or "he makes table" would derived from the more ge-
neral and more abstract structure "he is the maker of F"
or "he makes F". This generation raises many semantical
objections because the asztalos is not a 'table maker',
but a 'furniture maker'. The solution must be therefore in
any case semantical. The generation of derivatives of this
sort proceeds by expansion of the meaning of the stem:

(1) $\sum_{i=1}^{n} O_i \longrightarrow F$

table + chair + bed + ...   furniture

If and only if $f \in [O_i]$; where O_i is an optional object,
f is the semantic distinctive feature 'furniture' and $[O_i]$

is the set of semantic distinctive features of the object c_i. Therefore semantically $\left[c_i\right] \longrightarrow \left[F\right]$, i.e. the set of the semantic distinctive features of any individual O_i can be replaced by the set of semantic distinctive features of F. Accordingly $\left[F\right]$ is the expanded meaning of the StM (formulated with the help of Petőfi S. János).

(2)   StM   +   SuM $\longrightarrow$ D

'furniture'   'maker'   'furniture-maker'

There are still further possibilities.

One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn points out also the remote task: the generating of derivatives requires a semantical solution, such as can be worked out only by mathematical means.