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**ARTICLE**

# Onomasiological and Semasiological Perspectives in Studies on Neology

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a theoretical and methodological model for applying the concepts of onomasiology and semasiology to studies on neology. The creation of a neologism can be seen as an onomasiological process (from concept to denomination), whereas the interpretation of a neologism may be regarded as a semasiological process (from denomination to concept). In other words, the creator of a neologism starts from the concept he/she has in mind to find the best way to express it linguistically (onomasiology); the decoder of a neologism, in turn, starts from a neological expression to identify the meaning(s) intended by it (semasiology). In analyzing a neologism from one perspective or the other, different questions may be asked: a) from an onomasiological point of view, what linguistic resources are available to the speaker to create a neologism with the intended meaning; what resources are best suited to the specific communicative intentions of the creator of a neologism; how do phonological, syntactic, semantic, and factors influence the choice of a lexical creation mechanism? b) from a semasiological point of view, what are the possible meanings of a given neologism; what mechanisms can the listener use to properly interpret a neologism? The argument is exemplified with the analysis of neologisms in the *Base de neologismos do português brasileiro contemporâneo* (Contemporary Brazilian Portuguese Neologism Database) and in the corpus of journalistic blogs that integrate Ganança's dissertation.

***Keywords:*** Neology; Onomasiology; Semasiology; Morphology; Lexical Semantics

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# 1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to present a theoretical and methodological model for the analysis of neology based on the concepts of onomasiology and semasiology, both of which are by now well established in lexical studies. By resorting to the distinction between causes and mechanisms of lexical creation[1, 2], lexical creation is understood as a problem-solving activity that involves an onomasiological problem (the most adequate mechanism for creating a lexical item) and a semasiological problem (the intended meaning of a neological lexical item). According to this understanding, onomasiological and semasiological perspectives can guide the analysis of neologisms.

The concept of neology is here understood as the linguistic study of neologisms, i.e., newly coined words. It is a particularly important field of study in the French linguistic tradition, since, at least, Guilbert's work[3, 4], as well as in other Romance language studies, although not very present in the English-speaking tradition. Generally, neologisms are categorized according to their grammatical traits, in morphosyntactic neologisms (formed through morphological processes, such as derivation and compounding), semantic neologisms (words that acquire new meanings) and loanwords (words borrowed from other languages). There are many proposed typologies in the literature, discussed, for example, in Sablayrolles's work[5].

The data employed to illustrate our analysis is extracted from previous research, by ourselves and other investigators[6–9]. Most data were extracted from the *Base de neologismos do português brasileiro contemporâneo* (Contemporary Brazilian Portuguese Neologism Database, available at http://www.fflch.usp.br/dlcv/neo/), which contains neologisms coined in Brazilian press from 1993 onwards. A previous version of this paper was published in Brazilian Portuguese[10].

In Section 2, the concepts of onomasiology and semasiology are presented along with those of mechanisms and causes of lexical creation. The argument then moves on to present analyses of neological lexical items from each of those viewpoints (Sections 3 and 4). Finally, a few considerations are put forward to substantiate the importance of these concepts for the investigation of neology.

# 2. Theoretical Concepts: Onomasiology and Semasiology, Mechanisms and Causes of Lexical Creation

The distinction between onomasiology and semasiology may be presented as a distinction between two analytical perspectives: in the onomasiological perspective, one starts from the signified (or concept) and moves toward the signifier. This is in theory the sender's mental path, as he or she must find linguistic expression for the concept they wish to express. In Lexicology, onomasiological analyses are concerned with questions such as: 'What are the possible linguistic expressions for a given concept?'

In the semasiological perspective, in turn, one starts from the signifier and moves toward the signified. This is in theory the receiver's mental path, as he or she must ascribe meaning to the sender's oral or written linguistic expression. In Lexicology, semasiological analyses are concerned with questions such as: 'What are the possible meanings of a given expression?'

Geeraerts has explained the distinction in particularly clear terms:

Given that a lexical item couples a word form with a semantic content, the distinction between an onomasiological and a semasiological approach is based on the choice of either of the poles in this correlation as the starting-point of the investigation[1]. Thus, the onomasiological approach starts from the content side, typically asking the question 'Given concept *x*, what lexical items can it be expressed with?' Conversely, the semasiological approach starts from the formal side, typically asking the question 'Given lexical item *y*, what meanings does it express?' In other words, the typical subject of semasiology is polysemy and the multiple applicability of a lexical item, whereas onomasiology is concerned with synonymy and near-synonymy, name-giving, and the selection of an expression from among a number of alternative possibilities.

The distinction between onomasiology and semasiology is evidently of a theoretical and methodological nature; in using language and particularly in creating new lexical items, both types of question are closely related.

In addition to these two perspectives for the purposes of this paper it is also worthwhile presenting the distinction between mechanisms and causes of lexical creation, in line with

Geeraerts' proposals (Geeraerts' work deals fundamentally with lexical change of a semantic nature (named "semantic neology" by neology studies), but its observations may be extended to all types of lexical change[1]. The author still approaches a third issue, the spread of change by the linguistic community, which will not be considered here.):

a) the *mechanisms* of lexical creation comprise the array of possibilities for creating lexical items;

b) the *causes* of lexical creation are the factors that cause an individual to actualize one of those possibilities[1].

The mechanisms of lexical creation broadly correspond to the processes of word formation described in traditional grammars: derivation, compounding, semantic shifting, etc. They are the many possibilities offered by the linguistic system. The cases of lexical creation may in turn be conceived as two: *expressivity* and *efficiency*[1].

Expressivity (i.e., the need to express something, not expressiveness) bears on what is probably language's primary function: communication. Lexical creation thus occurs so that speakers may express something that still lacks adequate expression. This might happen when a new object appears, when a new discovery is made, when a culture changes how it sees the world or even when affective language is required, for example a euphemism, such as *malign tumor* for *cancer*[1].

Efficiency concerns the need to streamline the linguistic system: lexical creation would occur to impart communicative efficiency on a given language. It would therefore be an internal cause of the linguistic system. The clear example given by Geeraerts is the need to solve the homonymy between the words for 'cock' and for 'cat' in southwestern France, as studied by Gilliéron[1]. In that region, the phonetic evolution of the Latin words for 'cock' and for 'cat' had produced the homonymic form *gat*, which might have created difficulties for communication in agricultural communities. Speakers therefore had to create new names, especially for the rooster. In this case, lexical creation was motivated by an inner need of the system to optimize communication by avoiding homonymy. According to Geeraerts, this would be an instance of the 'isomorphic principle', according to which languages tend to form a one-to-one relationship between lexical forms and lexical meanings[1].

There would then be two causes of lexical change: expressivity (which is external to a given language, with a social, cultural, or pragmatic basis) and efficiency (internal to a given language, aimed at streamlining the system). The distinction, however, is not as strict as it could appear; one should bear in mind that the efficiency principle is subordinate to the expressivity principle. In the author's felicitous phrasing: "if there were no communicative intentions to be fulfilled, there would be no need for an efficient organization of the language that is used in fulfilling those intentions"[1]. The two causal principles should thus be viewed as complementary rather than exclusive. Blank prefers to integrate both concepts in a single principle, termed *efficiency of communication*, which is at the same time "the general purpose of communication and the general motivation behind language change"[11].

As we see it, the relation between mechanisms and causes of lexical creation may be understood by resorting to the concepts of onomasiology and semasiology. We start with the onomasiological perspective.

## 3. The Onomasiological Perspective

To approach the issue from an onomasiological perspective, one can imagine a speaker who faces the need to create a new lexical item. This speaker's problem may be phrased in the following question:

(1) Given a certain cause (or motive) for creating a lexical item, which mechanism (among those available in the language) is the most appropriate?

From the standpoint of onomasiology, lexical creation is thus viewed as an activity aimed at solving a specific problem. The solution found by the speaker may be judged appropriate or inappropriate according to certain criteria. Nonetheless, the task of the linguist who investigates neology is not finding the solution for this problem (this is the speaker's task); the question that the linguist should answer is rather:

(2) Why did the speaker consider this to be the most adequate solution?

Or, differently phrased:

(2') Why, for this specific cause (or motive), did the speaker choose to resort to this specific mechanism (and not to another)?

We believe this to be the main question in onomasiological studies of neology (this question should of course be

envisaged as a rough guide for an investigation; the factors actually involved – both linguistic and extralinguistic – could be multiplied to such an extent that one would never find an entirely adequate reply). It can be further divided into two associated questions:

(2a) What factors influence the use of a specific mechanism?

(2b) Why do these factors influence the mechanisms in this way?

Answering question (2a) is a relatively easy task, as compared to answering question (2b). Many contributions have been concerned with showing how phonological, syntactic, semantic and discursive factors, among others, may influence the choice of a specific process (e.g., compounding, prefixal or suffixal derivation, the use of this or that prefix or suffix, etc.). An example is the M.A. dissertation of Maroneze, describing, among others, phonological, morphological and syntactic factors involved in choosing one or another nominalizing suffix[6]. To answer question (2b), it is in turn necessary to bear in mind how language in general and lexical creation in particular work. In this paper, we propose that answers to (2b) must involve *functional explanations* that support the choice of factors indicated in (2a), especially explanations that are capable of relating mechanisms to causes, i.e., that show why a certain mechanism is the most adequate in view of the required cause.

To shed some light on these considerations, a few examples of replies to those questions can now be examined. The first example is the neological lexical item *historicização* (along with any formation ending in *-ização*), extracted from the word by Maroneze[6]. As far as this item is concerned, question (2) may be rephrased as in (3):

(3) Why, in order to express the notion of *historicizar* (*historicize*), did the speaker choose the suffix *-ção* (and not *-mento* or *-agem*)?

This question can be divided into two:

(3a) What factor or factors influenced the speaker to use the suffix *-ção*?

(3b) Why did this factor or these factors influence him or her in this way?

Maroneze has proposed a tentative reply to question (3a): the suffix *-ção* is the only nominalizing suffix that can be joined with verbal bases built with the verbal suffix *-izar*; one is therefore faced with a morphological factor[6]. It is furthermore necessary to explain why the suffix *-izar* demands the use of *-ção*. A possible answer is that the association between these suffixes is deeply entrenched in the mind, for a detailed description of the notion of *entrenchment* in Cognitive Grammar)[12]; this would therefore be a reply of a cognitive-functional order that could be paraphrased as follows: 'the suffix *-izar* demands the use of *-ção* because the cognitive processing of language is thus somehow facilitated'.

The second example is the neological item *apitaço*, analyzed, along with other items ending in *-aço*, by Alves[8]. The relevant question may be phrased as in (4):

(4) Why, to express a protest made with a whistle (Portuguese *apito*), a speaker chose the suffix *-aço* (and not, for example, compounds such as *apito-protesto*, i.e., 'whistle-protest')?

The author shows that resorting to that suffix is especially relevant as it evoked a particular historical event, the so-called Chilean *cacerolazo* or *panelazo* of 1973. The reason why a speaker chose that suffix is therefore the (implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious) need to bring this historical fact to the reader's mind; it is a motive of a communicative-functional order, that might be paraphrased as follows: 'the suffix *-aço* was chosen because it more adequately conveys the idea intended by the speaker'.

A further example that may be considered is a group of compound neological creations in which the second element is the word *fantasma* (Portuguese for "ghost"), such as *empresa-fantasma* ("ghost company"), *funcionário-fantasma* ("ghost employee"), etc (examples extracted from the work by Alves in 2006[13]). From an onomasiological point of view, one might ask:

(5) why did a speaker choose to use a compound rather than a prefix, such as *pseudo-empresa* or *pseudo-funcionário*, which would also actualize the idea of falsity?

It could be that the second element of the compounds, by referring to the notion of a "ghost" also communicates ideas as "apparent form", "evanescence", etc. Therefore, an *empresa-fantasma* is not only a false or non-existing company (a *pseudo-empresa*), but a company that appears to be real, while not actually being there, as a ghost. The explanation is therefore of a cognitive-functional order, since the speaker combined different cognitive domains[14].

It is clear that both types of explanation can adequately

relate the mechanisms and causes of lexical creation. These explanations are not always clearly presented, though, and can often be perceived only from certain theoretical perspectives. We do however believe that the linguist should always aim at finding this brand of explanation.

## Factors That Influence the Choice of Mechanism

It is thus evident that various mechanisms are available to the speaker who needs to create a lexical item; the choice among such mechanisms is conditioned by various factors, dealt with in questions 2a and 2b above. It is now necessary to make a few observations about the nature of such factors.

It should first be acknowledged that these factors may be of a linguistic or of an extralinguistic nature, as stated by Štekauer[15]:

It is postulated that the selection of one of the options at hand is always influenced by both linguistic (productivity, constraints, etc.) and sociolinguistic factors (education, profession, social background, influence of one's former linguistic experience, etc.).

In this paper, mainly for methodological reasons, the focus will be on linguistic factors. Such factors may be divided into two: a) features (usually semantic) that must be present in the neologism; b) restrictions that must be present in the lexical item(s) that are the base of the neologism.

Type (a) factors mainly concern the semantic-communicative effects intended by the sender, that is to say, he or she will choose the most adequate lexical creation mechanism to express the intended meaning, including connotation and stylistics. This may be exemplified with the following data, analyzed by (I) Maroneze and (II) Ganança: (I) to nominalize the adjective *dondoca* (qualifying a futile woman), the speaker chooses to create the neologism *dondoquice* (and not *dondoquidade* or *dondoqueza*, which might have been formed with competing suffixes), because the suffix *-ice* reinforces the affective, especially derogatory, connotations intended by the creator[2]; (II) to express the ideas of an individual that is not alive or that is not from the Brazilian state of Bahia, the authors of the blogs analyzed in Ganança created the neologisms *desvivo* and *desbaiano* (instead of *morto* and *não-baiano*), with a marked stylistic appeal, since the bases with which the prefix *des-* is usually associated are verbal, so that its combination with bases that carry a static meaning signals an intentional breach of linguistic restrictions and alters the neologism's meaning[9]. Therefore, *desvivo* and *desbaiano* include connotations that would not have been present in *morto* and in *não-baiano*.

Type (b) factors are conditions that must be present for a certain lexical creation mechanism to be applied; these conditions may also be understood as restrictions that preclude the application of a certain mechanism. Such restrictions might be phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, textual or even a combination of any number of those. Brief illustration is given with examples extracted from Maroneze[2].

Phonological restrictions conditioning the use of certain prefixes or suffixes appear to be rare in Portuguese. An example, however, is the tendency of verbs ending in *–i[C]ar* (in which C stands for any consonant) to combine with the suffix *-ção* instead of its competitors *-mento* or *-agem*, which would explain neological formations such as *glicação* (the action of *glicar*, i.e., of uniting a protein and a carbohydrate) and *paparicação* (the action of *paparicar*, i.e., of pampering or spoiling)[16]. Other languages exhibit more phonological restrictions; in English, for example, the nominalizing suffix *-al* only applies to oxytone verbs[17].

The most influential morphological factor in the mechanisms of word formation are restrictions for the cooccurrence of two or more affixes. For example, prefixed verbs tend to be nominalized with the suffix *-mento*, and adjectives ending in *-vel* are only nominalized with the suffix *–(i)dade*, instead of *-eza* or any other possible competitor (thus *reparabilidade* and *treinabilidade*)[2, 6]. Another example could be found in formations with the prefix *recém-*, an apocope of the adverb *recentemente* (Portuguese for 'recently') which, because of its adverbial origin, is only associated with participial lexical bases, as shown by Ganança[9].

Restrictions of a semantic nature involve features of meaning that must be present in the base so that the mechanism may be applied. This may be exemplified with the competing suffixes *-(i)dade* and *-ice*, the most frequent adjective nominalizers. The first of those tends to be associated with adjectives with a specifying semantic function, whereas the other tends to be associated with adjectives that have a qualifying semantic function[2]. As far as prefixes are concerned, one can refer to *ex-*, which currently actualizes the meaning of 'which has ceased being', thus restricting the bases that it can join. Therefore, according to the analysis

conducted by Ganança, formations such as *ex-pai* and *ex-mãe* are semantically impossible, since it is not possible, at least not from a biological perspective, to cease being someone's father or mother[9]. Formations with lexical bases that are not subject to a change of status, such as *ex-Corinthians* and *ex-Verde*, which have been collected by Ganança can be explained by the suppression of the bases 'player' and 'party member', easily recoverable in the context[9].

It is common to consider the restriction of most suffixes to specific word classes as an example of a syntactic restriction factor; for example, Plag states that the restriction of the English suffix *-able* to verbal bases is syntactic[17]. However, a question might be asked: are there 'purely' syntactic factors, or would these rather be the reflection of an underlying semantic factor? In other terms, when stating that a given suffix is associated with verbs, would this refer to the syntactic class of verbs or to semantic features that are present in verbs and also required by the suffix? By adopting a critical stance *vis-à-vis* a strict separation between syntax and semantics and maybe even the precedence of semantics over syntax, syntactic (and maybe even morphological) factors might be better understood as having a semantic nature[18]. We thus prefer to analyze syntactic restrictions as special cases of semantic restrictions.

Finally, restrictions of a textual-discursive nature can also be considered in selecting a specific lexical creation mechanism. The most influential textual factors in determining the choice of a certain lexical creation mechanism are probably those related to textual genre and to the textual-discursive domain. Rocha, for example, shows that argumentative genres tend to favor the use of deverbal abstract nouns more than narrative texts[16]; Alves identifies many prefixes, such as intensifiers, that are more frequently employed in advertisement[19]; Ganança demonstrates that the recategorization of the prefix *super-* as an intensity adverb, in formations such as *super de boa* mainly occurs in texts that circulate in informal contexts, in which orality is more pronounced[9]. To these, one could add many studies in the field of Terminology that have shown how certain domains (Medicine, Computing, etc.) favor the use of certain lexical creation mechanisms[16].

It is worthwhile noting that restrictions in the use of mechanisms are seldom categorical; they are rather more or less pronounced tendencies that may always be contradicted.

In summary, from an onomasiological perspective, one describes the mechanisms and causes of lexical creation; from a semasiological perspective, the analysis bears on the factors involved in interpreting neologisms. In the next section, a few questions in the semasiological study of neology are approached.

# 4. The Semasiological Perspective

As previously explained, the semasiological approach moves from the signifier toward the signified, occupying itself with questions such as: 'What are the possible meanings of a given expression?'. If, from an onomasiological point of view, one should imagine a speaker that must create a lexical item, in order to understand the semasiological perspective, let one imagine an individual that must now interpret this new item. This individual's problem may be phrased as a question divided into two parts:

(5a) What are the possible meanings of this neologism?

(5b) Which of them was or were intended by the sender?

Seeking to answer both questions is the receiver's task (as much as the onomasiological act of lexical creation, the proper interpretation of a neologism is ultimately a matter of pragmatics that involves factors such as the receiver's willingness to interpret. The linguistic analysis that is the focus of our attention is only part of the problem); the linguist, who is placed outside of the communicative setting, must answer only question (5a) (and still, only as far as linguistic possibilities are concerned; there will always be innumerous meanings stemming from contextual factors that lie beyond the scope of semantic analysis). To that purpose, he or she shall consider the same evidence presented to the receiver. Two such sets of evidence will be separately presented below, related though they are: the compositionality of the neologism and the polysemy of the lexical creation mechanisms.

## 4.1. Compositionality in the Interpretation of Neologisms

In many semantic theories, the meaning of a complex linguistic expression is understood to be, in one way or another, equivalent to the sum of the meanings of its constituents. This is known as the 'principle of compositionality' and may be phrased as follows:

(6) The meaning of a linguistically complex expression

is a compositional function of the meanings of its linguistic constituents[20].

The principle of compositionality is treated as more or less relative by each theory, but is never entirely ruled out. An attempt is made here to show to what extent it impacts on the interpretation of neologisms formed by derivation.

As a first example, one can take the derived neologism *novelizar*[2]. Its meaning can be regarded as the 'sum' of the meanings of *novela* ('soap opera') and *-izar*. The compositional meaning of *novelizar* might thus be described as 'making (something) a soap opera', just as *humanizar* is 'making (something or someone) human' and *batizar* is 'making (someone) baptized'. However, defining *novelizar* as 'making something a soap opera' does not manage to embrace the entirety of the neologism's meaning. The following statement represents the context in which it was created:

According to one of [the television broadcasting station] *Globo*'s directors, the vulgarization of the *JN* ['Jornal Nacional', the company's major daily news show] is not an appropriate choice. 'It's useless to try to <*novelizar*> the news broadcast to please the audience', states this broadcasting station director. 'This would be naïve'. [translated from: Segundo um diretor da própria Globo, a popularização do JN não é uma escolha adequada. "Não adianta querer novelizar o telejornal para satisfazer ao público", afirma esse diretor da emissora. "Isso é ingenuidade."]

It is thus apparent that the meaning of *novelizar* could be better described as 'imparting the typical features of a soap opera to (a news broadcast, for example)'. This clearly shows that there is more in the meaning of a complex lexical item than the sum of the meanings of its constituents.

One can further exemplify this with the compound neologism *informação-chiclete* ('chewing-gum information'), attested in the Contemporary Brazilian Portuguese Neologism Database. For a proper understanding of the meaning of this neologism, here follows a transcription of the context in which it was inserted:

In the case of newspapers, I believe that it is a matter of survival to stimulate and widen the public of actual readers (i.e., reasoners), or otherwise the readership will become a flock of chewers of <*informação-chiclete*> that is broadcast by the television. [translated from: No caso dos jornais, acredito que é questão de sobrevivência estimular e ampliar o público de verdadeiros leitores (isto é, raciocinadores), sob pena de vê-los transformarem-se num rebanho de mascadores de informação-chiclete distribuída pela TV.]

It is evident that the meaning of the whole is not exactly the sum of the meanings of its parts, since the first element of the compound, *informação*, induces the second, *chiclete*, to be understood as a metaphor; in other words, *informação-chiclete* is information that the public metaphorically 'chews' without digesting it, that is to say, without assimilating and making it a springboard for more elaborate reasoning. Based on two different lexical items, the speaker thus engages in a series of mental operations that elaborate on their original meanings and ends up producing an unexpected creation that is not in essence the mere sum of its parts.

These considerations lead to a reevaluation of the reach of the principle of compositionality. One way of moving forward would be to state that the linguistic meaning of a complex expression refers only to that portion that could be compositionally calculated; all other surplus traits of meaning would be ascribed to the influence of contextual and/or extralinguistic factors and would therefore pertain to the study of Pragmatics or to the Philosophy of Language. This is the stance taken by theories that assume a sharp distinction between Semantics and Pragmatics, such as Formal Semantics.

Another possibility would be to treat the concept of compositionality in relative terms, maintaining that this principle is not sufficient to *determine* the meaning of an expression, but only to *suggest* or *activate* such meaning. This is the course taken by Langacker in stating that language is only imbued with *partial compositionality*[14]; meaning would be of a fundamentally encyclopedic nature and a strict division between Semantics and Pragmatics is impracticable. In this paper, we assume this latter understanding, without dwelling on the details of the author's argument, which can be found in the work by Langacker[14].

It seems therefore adequate to distinguish between two levels of meaning in a neologism, irrespective of its being a derivational or a compound formation: *compositional meaning*, which can be 'calculated' from the meanings of its individual elements, and what can be termed *lexical meaning*, the specific meaning stemming from various factors, both linguistic and extralinguistic (Rainer states that this distinction is traditional in studies of word formation in German; in that language, they are termed *Wortbedeutung* – lexical

meaning – and *Wortbildungsbedeutung* – compositional or constructional meaning [21]).

Although distinct, these two levels are certainly mutually related. It might be possible to conceive of lexical meaning (or at least part of it) as an extension of compositional meaning subjected to metaphorical and metonymical processes, among others. In other words, it might be possible to predict, albeit partially, lexical meaning from compositional meaning. Besides, in the process of incorporating a neologism in a language's lexicon, lexical meaning will become conventional and might change in different directions. These issues have been increasingly approached by cognitive semantic theories, especially in studies on metaphor and metonymy and comprise an important field of semasiological research [22, 23]. The work of Maroneze shows how metonymy seems to operate in relating both levels of meaning, in the case of neological lexical items [2]. A few examples are:

CHARACTERISTIC OF ITS POSSESSOR OR CREATOR: *dickensiano* and other uses of *-ano* [2].

ACTION BY ITS TYPICAL AGENT: *buarquear*, *malufar* and other neological verbs [2].

## 4.2. The Polysemy of the Mechanisms of Lexical Creation

Polysemy may be defined as the association of two or more signifieds with a single signifier. It is a phenomenon massively present in natural languages and increasingly studied by Cognitive Semantics, as pointed out by Silva [24]. Nevertheless, according to the same author, "studies of Portuguese lexical polysemy and (even more) of grammatical polysemy are still scarce" [24].

Just as lexical items, the mechanisms of lexical creation can also be affected by polysemy. There are a number of studies that investigate the particular case of suffixes. Some of them are presented below, with no attempt at being comprehensive.

Augmentative and diminutive suffixes are probably those affixes whose polysemy has been most extensively described. Cunha and Cintra, for instance, describe their many uses in great detail [25]; authors concerned with Stylistics, such as Lapa and Martins, also devote many pages to describing the polysemy of augmentative and especially of diminutive suffixes [26, 27]. This is due to the fact that as a rule such polysemy concerns new meanings of an affective nature. Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning the work of Silva on the polysemy of the diminutive from the perspective of Cognitive Semantics [24].

If the polysemy of degree suffixes has been adequately described, even in traditional grammar handbooks, the same cannot be said about other kinds of suffixes. For example, Cunha and Cintra, while devoting many pages to degree suffixes, do no more than list other suffixes and present their fundamental meanings; they are shown to be polysemic, but no specific considerations are devoted to how they are used [25].

Regarding the affective polysemic suffixes described in works concerned with Stylistics, Lapa's handbook mentions almost none apart from diminutives [26]. Martins is more wide-ranging, drawing attention to noun-forming suffixes that "might (not necessarily, we insist) add a derogatory, a playful, a picturesque or a disapproving tone", such as *-ice*, *-ismo*, *-agem*, *-ção*, etc., along with adjective (*-oso*, *-udo*, *-ento*, *-esco*, *-oide*, etc.) and verb (*-inhar*, *-icar*, *itar*, etc.) forming suffixes that also have affective connotations [27].

More recently, a number of studies have been developed within the *Grupo de Morfologia Histórica do Português* (Group of Historical Morphology of the Portuguese Language), coordinated by Mário Eduardo Viaro. The group has devoted its attention to describing the various meanings that Portuguese suffixes have assumed over time. Some of the suffixes analyzed by this group are *-eiro*, *-ista*, *-nc(i)a*, *-mento*, *-(i)dade* and *-agem*, among others [28–33].

Polysemy is also present in the suffixes used for creating neologisms. In analyses of neologisms from the 1980s and the 1990s, Alves describes the polysemy of suffixes such as *-ite*, *-oide*, *-ol* and *-aço*, among others [4, 5, 7, 8]. Maroneze has also described the polysemy of various suffixes, such as *-ção*, *-agem* and *-nc(i)a* [2, 3]. As these works show, the study of neologisms may reveal what changes have been developing in the meaning of lexical creation mechanisms, particularly in that of suffixes. Bearing these considerations in mind and relating polysemy and the distinction between lexical and constructional meaning, one might also ask whether such polysemy might be related only to constructional meaning or would actually involve both of them. In order to avoid a digression, see the work by Maroneze [2].

In the domain of prefixes, some interesting cases of

polysemy may also be identified. In this respect, we refer the reader to the study by Alves, in which the author analyzes the semantic and morphosyntactic features of various prefixes of Brazilian Portuguese [19].

Regarding the polysemy of these affixes, Ganança asserts that the Portuguese prefixal system cannot be properly understood without taking into account its inherent semantic diversity [9]. For example, the prefixes *ex-* and *super-*, which in neological formations currently actualize the respective meanings of 'stop being X' and 'a lot', in older formations, such as *exportar* and *supercílio*, respectively meant 'out of' and 'superior position'. The current meanings thus show that prefixes change their meaning and therefore are polysemic.

The author also presents the case of the prefix *trans-*, which in neological lexical formations, besides the meaning of 'beyond' might also signify 'transexual'. In *transmídia* and *transnarrativa*, neologisms collected by Ganança, the examples below show that the affix actualizes the idea of 'beyond' [9]. *Transmídia* and *transnarrative* are thus the medium and the narrative that go beyond or transcend the medium and the narrative in question. The neologism *transcidadania*, however, also collected by Ganança, means 'the citizenship of a transexual individual', and not a 'transcendental citizenship' [9]. The truncation of *transsexual* has caused a metonymical transfer of the content of the word to the prefix, which as a result became polysemic.

Topic of <*transmídia*>: a soap opera makes an impact on the internet as a result of the success of the plot. [translated from: "Temática da transmídia: uma novela ganha repercussão na internet em decorrência do sucesso da trama."]

A few colleagues have – rightly – pointed out that *Guardians* is a <*transnarrativa*> movie, [...]. That is to say, it is a movie that dispenses with a storyline, that holds on to a thread of a plot without any commitment to making sense or to presenting a broad outline of the characters and their dilemmas. (Ana Maria Bahiana, 4th August, 2014) [translated from: "Alguns colegas apontaram – com razão – que Guardiões é um filme transnarrativa, (...). Ou seja, é um filme que prescinde de história, que se segura num fiapo de trama sem nenhum compromisso com fazer sentido ou apresentar grandes contornos dos personagens e seus dilemas."]

Despite having put forward interesting ideas such as the full LGBT health insurance and <*Transcidadania*> (none of which was eventually implemented), the Haddad administration was responsible for major reversals, especially closing down the *Autorama* [a gay cruising point in *Ibirapuera* Park's carpark] (not even Serra and Kassab had managed to do this much) and ending the *Operação Trabalho* Program, that ensured a subsidy for some vulnerable LGBT citizens, most of whom were either transexual or transvestite. [translated from: "Apesar de ter lançado ideias interessantes, como o plano de saúde integral LGBT e o Transcidadania (nenhum dos dois implementados), o governo Haddad foi responsável por graves retrocessos, especialmente o fechamento do Autorama [local de encontro gay no estacionamento do Parque Ibirapuera](nem o Serra e o Kassab tinham conseguido a façanha)e o encerramento do Programa Operação Trabalho, que garantia um benefício para algumas LGBT em situação de vulnerabilidade, a maioria transexuais e travestis."]

# 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, an attempt has been made to organize neology studies on the basis of the concepts of onomasiology and semasiology. The creation and the interpretation of a neologism are understood as problem-solving activities: the onomasiological problem, facing the creator of a neologism, may be defined as determining 'what the most adequate neologism for expressing a given meaning is'; the semasiological problem, in turn, facing the receiver of a neologism, may be phrased as determining 'what the intended meaning of this neologism is'. From one or the other perspective, the linguist who studies neology shall raise different questions. It is hoped that the considerations put forward in this paper may help researchers in asking questions that are pertinent for analyzing the data at hand (that is to say, the neologisms).

After both perspectives and their consequences for the study of neology have been presented, one could ask whether the distinction is not in fact equivalent to that between morphology and semantics. After all, the onomasiological perspective seems to focus fundamentally on morphological issues, whereas the semasiological perspective appears to approach basically semantic concerns.

Without dismissing this association, we believe that semantics and morphology are integrated in both perspectives. As an example, one could point out, on the one hand, the existence of semantic restrictions in the use of certain mech-

anisms, and, on the other hand, the resort to morphological notions in distinguishing between compositional and lexical meaning.

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## Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study were obtained from previously published sources, all of which are cited in the manuscript. No new data were generated or analyzed specifically for this study.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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