



# Ad-Hoc Lexical Units as Markers of Communicative Strategies in the TV-Series "Sex and the City"

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## ABSTRACT

The paper aims at elucidating the manipulative potential of ad-hoc word-formation in the TV series through the prism of linguocognitive and pragmatic approaches. The prospects of identifying communicative strategies that underlie ad-hoc words in the dramedy lay grounds to contemplating their role as markers of the manipulative impact optimization. The paper proposes to elucidate the role of various word-building types of ad-hoc units in construing memorable characters that the viewing audience can identify with by means of the integrated linguocognitive and communicative analysis. Given that the telecinematic discourse presents a complex multimodal unity, operating at two levels: diegetic and extradiegetic, the author argues that ad-hoc units realize communicative strategies of self-presentation and characterization at both in-film and through-film levels, correlating with the two key functions of dramedy: attraction and manipulation. Various word-building types of ad-hoc units that serve as markers of the self-presentation strategy help the main female characters express themselves while the collective author is construing an image of a charismatic and independent thirty-something heroine. Ad-hoc units that realize the characterization strategy are mainly used in witty friendly banter (diegetic level) to highlight stereotypical relationships problems.

**Keywords:** Ad-hoc word-formation; Telecinematic discourse; Communicative strategy; Communicative tactic; Communicative technique.

## 1. Introduction

Socially oriented studies of human speech activity through the prism of cognitive mechanisms have provided an impetus for the emergence of a cognitive approach to considering linguistic phenomena and their speech properties. Within the framework of communicative-cognitive paradigm (Van Dijk, 2011; Carter, 2004; Bubel, 2006; Dynel, 2011; Lipka, 2007; Toolan, 2011), communicative strategies and communicative tactics, as stipulated by the author's purport and hence realized by ad-hoc words, pose a problem for investigation. In this light, ad-hoc words are markers of relevant communicative strategies. Ad-hoc word-formation reflects the author's search for linguistically ingenious ways of presenting new knowledge based on the interaction of concepts from the mental lexicon of both characters and viewers in order to exercise manipulative effect on the target audience. The communicative-cognitive dimension of ad-hoc word-formation in telecinematic discourse has not yet been given a sufficient amount of grounded attention, which would elucidate a range of strategies through which the author influences the audience at various levels of the dramedy "Sex and the City".

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Film Discourse

Given a close-knit interaction between language and society, telecinematic discourse represents a powerful tool of manipulation with the mindsets of the audience. It is a multimodal entity with a rich variety of genres and target audiences. The key features distinguishing telecinematic discourse from a narrative text are the effect of external overhearing (Kozloff, 1998; Jaeckle, 2013) and two-level reality depiction, e.g., extradiegetic and diegetic (Janney, 2012). Among other features are the following: the audio-visual dimension of narrative structures (Kuhn, & Schmidt, 2014); genre and linguistic stereotypification; overhearer's presence (Jaeckle, 2013); ambivalent point of view (Janney, 2012).

What remains almost entirely unexplored is the manipulative potential of ad-hoc lexical units in telecinematic discourse, intended to construe images of trustworthy characters.

### 2.2. Ad-hoc Word-Formation

The study of ad-hoc word-formation originated in geographically determined ad-hoc research schools, which led to several complementary approaches. The structural approach focuses on the word-building characteristics of ad-hoc words. The communicative approach shows all the implied interest in the etymological parameters of ad-hoc units. The synergetic approach regards ad-hoc units as macro-level fluctuations, stimulating the entire language system reboot. From the linguocognitive paradigm standpoint, an ad-hoc word contains quanta of information that reveals the author's linguistically creative comprehension of reality.

The communicative-cognitive paradigm has shifted focus to the continuity of cognitive processes, language, speech, and extralinguistic reality, hence to the communicative actualization of ad-hoc coinages, verbalizing communicative strategies. Thus, ad-hoc word-formation in telecinematic discourse is an act of non-linear communication (Janney, 2012) with the available sender (production team or collective author), communicative intention, and the receiver (the audience). The focus of the analysis is the in-depth motives and meta-contexts that reveal the characters' desire for approval, condemnation, etc., based on shared knowledge (Dynel, 2013).

In the light of the abovementioned vectors, we consider ad-hoc lexical units to be non-standard lexical formations, coined as a result of a skilful manipulation with the existing lexical sources, dependent on individual linguistic creativity and providing conventional speech acts with additional expressiveness.

The driving force behind the ad-hoc word-formation in telecinematic discourse is lexical creativity, further differentiated as lexical creativity in literature with a focus on the skill of the author (Crystal, 2000; Stekauer, 2000) and lexical creativity in everyday speech (Buzassiova, & Martincova, 2003; Carter, 2003), based on the intentional playful altering of linguistic resources during a communicative act (Kuiper, 2007), or unintentional slips of the tongue (Atkins, & Carter, 2012; Hohenhaus, 2007; Lipka, 2007). Given both approaches, we regard linguistic creativity as the ability of language users to creatively re-format the available language material, thus triggering the creation of ad-hoc words to satisfy the need of the moment.

## 3. Methodology & data

### 3.1. Material and data compilation

The corpus of ad-hoc lexical units (hereinafter referred to as AHLU) was formed by a continuous sampling method based on the lexicographic verification principle (by Zatsny). Further on, elements of structural, word-formation and morphological analysis, as well as the procedure of transcription, were employed to systematize the retrieved ad-hoc words, and correlate between the more and less represented ad-hoc word-formation types.

### 3.2. Methods and procedure

Since the present study integrates the developments of both linguocognitive and communicative-cognitive paradigms, we propose our own method of the ad-hoc word-formation analysis in the "Sex and the City", consisting of 4 stages.

At the first stage, we analyzed the peculiarities of dramedy as a TV genre. The dramedy is a hybrid genre of an entertaining television product, based on a widespread television formula with pronounced stylistics and recognizable rhetorical and visual features. The term "dramedy" (Bednarek, 2012; Bubel, 2006; Toolan, 2011; Piazza, 2011) originated in the 1980s, its peculiarities being: 1) playing upon a popular stereotype; 2) witty verbal altercations, comic presentation of persuasive information; 3) socio-cultural stereotypification; 4) considerable attention to intimate relationships; 5) happy end in the form of ceremonial rituals. The content analysis reveals the content of the STC drama: the friendship of four heroines, their intimate experiments, search for Mr Perfect, and "urban loneliness" (Auster, 2005).

The second stage of the research methodology involves interpretive-textual and contextual analysis methods to retrieve ad-hoc marked contexts (hereinafter AMC), being text fragments, where linguistic and non-linguistic factors reveal the meaning of the ad-hoc word (Nikonova, 2007): 1) a polylogic/monologic cue of one sentence: *Barkley, a notorious modelizer <...>* (S. 1); 2) a polylogic/monologic cue of several sentences: *<...> But how do we know when*

<...> the "pain-pains" take over? (S. 2); 3) a micro text /polylogue of several verbal exchanges: - *I'm not going on a simu-date* (S. 6).

The third stage involved the analysis of the linguocognitive nature of AHLU, applying Turner and (2002) mental space integration theory, e.g., **Manhattan** (a prestigious area, with women craving to find and wealth – the input spaces *Men* + *Manhattan* = a blended space, with direct dictionary semantic components (Nikitchenko, 2014), i.e. components of input space 1 "Men "male person", and input space 2 "District" blending with associative semantic components of input spaces "success", "Relationships" (related to input space 1) "wealth", "fashion", "woman" (related to input space 2).

The fourth stage involved conversational analysis and context-interpretation analysis in revealing the pragmatic potential of AHLU: AHLU word-formation type → AHLU informational load → AHLU as a component of a stylistic figure → communicative technique (a set of verbal and non-verbal means to avert communicative failures) → , communicative tactic (communicative skills to establish fruitful cooperation and produce the required effect) → communicative strategy (intentionality, author's purport, foreseeing the produced effect):

(1) - *I can't even be around that man. He's dangerous and toxic.*

- *So, he's a **manthrax**? (S. 5) (man 'a male human being' + anthrax 'infectious disease, affecting cattle'), 'an ulcer of a man'.*

Derision of a person through the AHLU "manthrax" actualizes the communicative technique of labelling. Negative characterization by slamming a man's typical traits through labelling actualizes the communicative tactic of negative characterization (Carrie castigates Samantha's lover Richard Wright as a cheater), negatively evaluating men involved in toxic relationships. Thus the communicative strategy of characterization is realized.

#### 4. Overall results and discussion

##### 4.1. Manipulative potential of Ad-hoc formation in the dramedy "Sex and the City."

We attempted to explain the role of various word-formation types of ad-hoc units in the realization of communicative strategies (hereinafter referred to as CS), communicative tactics (CT), and communicative techniques (CTq). Ad-hoc words in the dramedy "Sex and the City" realize two recurring communicative strategies (CS of self-presentation and CS of characterization).

##### 4.2. CS of self-presentation

CS of self-presentation is represented by cooperative CTs (the sender's communicative purport corresponds to the receiver's willingness and ability to decode the message) and non-cooperative CTs, intensifying speech discord (see Table 1).

Table 1. Ad-Hoc Lexical Units as Markers of CS of Self-Presentation

Communicative tactic	AHLU			AMC	
	<b>Word-building type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	
positive personal information provision through <b>self-branding</b>	Blends	112	29%	59	
	Compounds	98	25%	51	
	Holophrastic constructions	87	23%	46	
	Affixal derivatives	73	18%	38	
	Abbreviations	17	3%	7	
positive personal information provision through <b>exemplification</b>	Anaphoric compounds	83	7%	44	
positive personal information provision through <b>evoking overhearer's associations</b>	Compounds	52	37%	27	
	Affixal derivatives	41	29%	22	
	Converted units	29	21%	15	
	Daffinitions	18	13%	9	
positive personal information provision through <b>addressing the overhearer's emotions</b>	Affixal derivatives	14	1%	7	
	Compounds	110	50%	58	
	Holophrastic constructions	30	14%	16	
	Converted units	66	31%	35	
negative personal information provision through <b>impoliteness</b>	Taboo-+ analogy	66	88%	33	
	Dysphemisms	8	12%	4	
negative personal information provision through <b>epatage</b>	AHLU, coined by analogy	59	42%	31	
	Converted units	48	34%	25	
	Compounds	34	24%	18	
<b>self-disclosure</b>	Affixal derivatives	36	28%	19	
	Analogy	24	19%	13	
	Holophrastic constructions	18	14%	9	
	Compounds	12	9%	6	
<b>escape from self-disclosure</b>	Compounds	16	12%	8	
	Holophrastic constructions	12	9%	6	
	Compounds	8	6%	4	
	Onomatopoeic exclamations	3	2%	2	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1167</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>614</b>	

Source: own calculations

The **CTq of self-branding** aims to present oneself as a well-established brand, correlating with the author's intent to create a "quoted" heroine. Self-branding prevails in friendly banter between Carrie Bradshaw (an advice-column author) and Samantha Jones (PR-manager). It is conveyed by expressive nominations and epithets, verbalized by blends: *I am a "sex-pert"*, compounds: *I was a sex-columnist*, holophrastic constructions: *I'm a "solve-your-own-problems" gal*), affixes: *I am a loveaholic*, abbreviations (*I <...> live in a neighbourhood that's trendy by day and tranny by night*) or gradations verbalized by different types of AHLU in the same AMC: *I'm a non-Model. But the modellers of real people <...> I'm gonna supermodel and supersize that!*

**CTq of exemplification** maximizes the accuracy of spontaneous dialogues in stylized communication. The main purpose of this technique is to identify with the audience (diegetic level) and construe a trustworthy character (extradiegetic level). Hence, characters adopt stereotypical speaking patterns by means of false compounds with an empty component *thing* (by Hohenhaus), with reference to either previous or further context: *Meet me for a drink thing* (S. 2).

Cooperative CT of personal information provision is realized through the CTq of evoking overhearer's associations and the CTq of appealing to overhearer's emotions.

**CTq of evoking the overhearer's associations** (140 AHLU, 74 AMC) is based on intertextuality through "allusion-based witticisms" (Dynel, 2011, p. 44.), references to precedent texts (Nikitchenko, 2011; Sunko, 2015, p. 44): *We should open a brothel, like Starbucks. Starfucks*, metaphorical and metonymic antonomasias, verbalized by analogical AHLU: *How very George Michael of you!* (S. 4). Despite the seeming incomprehensibility, the collective author does expect the overhearer to decode the author's purport (Haydanka, 2018).

**CT of positive personal information provision through addressing the overhearer's emotions** (220 AHLU, 108 AMC) with the help of "perlocutionary intensifiers" (Kryvoruchko, 2015, p. 57). It is prevalent in voice-overs, focusing the overhearer's attention on the subject-matter of the episode by using certain speech formulae (Haydanka, 2018): 1) I feel + AHLU: *I'm feeling hey-world-I'm-thirty-five!* (S. 2, Ep. 4); 2) I felt like + AHLU: *Nothing makes you feel like more of a non-couple than creating another non-couple* (S. 1, Ep. 3); 3) substantivized AHLU + feelings: *his shower-free feelings about sex* (S. 1, Ep. 12); 4) verbalized AHLU + feelings: *to sugar-coat your feelings*. (S. 6, Ep. 14); 5) It's so + AHLU: *It's so ninth-grade of you* (S. 4, Ep. 11); 6) Emotional + AHLU: – *How can you have had an emotional mini-drama* (S. 4, Ep. 5); 7) expressions with intensifiers damn / hell / fucking: *You're the hell dump-friendly* (S. 2, Ep. 5).

The non-cooperative communicative tactic of **negative personal information provision through**

### **impoliteness and epatage**

Since real verbal exchanges may be utterly emotional (Quaglio, 2009), the impoliteness technique uses obscenities that help the characters relieve emotions. It is rendered by epithets, nicknames, terms of address, verbalized by evaluative AHLU with derogatory component: – *He's a regular jerk-de-soleil* (S. 6) – a clumsy lover (from "cirque-de-soleil"). The AHLU function as pragmatic discourse markers (Roth-Gordon 2007) or negatively-coloured expressemes. **CTq of epatage** construes a charismatic female antagonist by exploiting themes of female sexual freedom, rendered by similes, antithesis, metaphors, (like/as if + I + be + AHLU (*like I was fuckenstein*): – <...> *I masturbated to my priest. Friar-fuck*. Interestingly, the epatage technique produces an opposite manipulative effect upon the target audience; compelling viewers admire Samantha's sexual freedom (Haydanka, 2018).

**CTq of self-disclosure** (Holtgraves, 1990; Jones, & Pittman, 1982, p. 42) is peculiar for persons who position themselves as inferior, based on low self-esteem or in order to be felt sorry for. It implies an identical sender and receiver (Kansu-Yetkiner, 2006). The stylistic indicators were mostly litotes, verbalized by AHLU with negative prefixes non-, un-, under-, dis-; the suffix –less: *the bride-to-be and her maid-of-dishonour* (S. 2, Ep. 11).

**CTq of "escape from self-disclosure"** (Kuzmych, 2013), or offensive self-presentation (Schütz, 1998; Schütz, 2005) is based on intelligent self-ironizing, conveyed by ascending gradation, sarcastic irony, litotes: – *I'm seeing a whole bunch of unspecial guys*. (S. 4).

### **4.3. Communicative strategy of characterization**

The communicative strategy of characterization proved to be another through-film strategy in the dramedy. Mostly cooperative tactics (CT of positive characterization and CT of bonding) and non-cooperative CT of negative characterization (see Table 2) manifest it.

**Table 2.** Ad-Hoc Lexical Units as Markers of the CS of Characterization

CT and CTq	AHLU			AMC	
	Word-building type	Number	%	Number	
positive characterization through <b>positive politeness</b>	Compounds	130	58%	65	
	Suffixal derivatives	32	15%	16	
	Abbreviation	20	9%	10	
	Reduplication	14	6%	8	
positive characterization through <b>glittering generalities</b>	AHLU with the component <i>-jew</i>	11	0,5%	6	
	AHLU with the component <i>-friend</i>	23	1%	12	
	AHLU with the component <i>-love</i>	116	38%	58	
	AHLU with the component <i>-sex</i>	153	51%	74	
<b>bonding</b>	Daffinitions	217	51%	114	
	Compounds	141	33%	74	
	Converted Units	34	8%	18	
	Suffixal derivatives	23	5%	12	
	Blends	7	2%	3	
characterization through <b>impolite derision</b>	Holophrastic constructions	36	38%	19	
	Converted Units	16	17%	8	
	Compounds	37	39%	19,5	
	Abbreviations	5	1%	3	
characterization through <b>labelling</b>	Blends	6	0,5%	3,2	
	Holophrastic constructions	51	23%	27	
	Abbreviations	12	0,5%	6	
	Compounds	15	1%	8	
	Affixal derivatives	38	16%	20	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1264</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>665</b>	

Source: own calculations

Cooperative CT of characterization envisages axiological description of characters from the point of view of other characters (diegetic level), as well as construing the stereotypical image of the heroine (extradiegetic level). It is realized through the CTq of positive politeness (Zajdman, 1995) and "glittering generalities" (Propaganda Analysis).

**CTq of positive politeness**, or redressing strategy (by Brown and Levinson), aims at the humorous reinterpretation of arising conflicts by jocular irony, hyperbole, epithets through derivatives with suffixes *-i.e.*, *-licious* and holophrastic constructions: – *What do you think, mutey?* (S. 3, Ep. 2).

**CTq of "glittering generalities"** implicitly emphasizes virtues the collective author accentuates. It is verbalized by compounds with the semes *-friend-*: *He's a friend-in-pain* (S. 4)); *-love-*: *I took the elevator to Loverville* (S. 6); *-sex-*: *I had slept in Big's sex-sheets*; *-jew-*: *Charlotte had a zsa-zsa-Jew* (S. 5).

**CT of bonding** is realized through a CTq of jocular teasing in the form of nipping or "joking relationships (by Zajdman)) and flirting by jocular irony, allusions, and euphemisms: – *Maybe your hu-hu (female genitals) would like an order of fries?* The AHLU are mainly non-informative units whose interpretation requires considerable cognitive effort on the part of the overhearer:

(2) – *Bisexuality and just a layover on the way to **Gaytown**.*

– *Is **RickyMartinville** the next one?*



- He's **double-dipping** (S. 3)

**CT of characterization** is realized by CTq of labelling and CTq of impolite derision.

The main purpose of **impolite derision** is degrading the interlocutor by emphasizing his flaws or vices in monologues and scenes of gossiping (Bubel, 2006; Bubel, & Spitz, 2006) through holophrastic constructions, compounds, converted units, abbreviations: - *Samantha Jones turns out just a **fag-hag** (S. 5) – faggot 'gay' + hag ugly witch* ('an elderly woman who dates gays to maintain the reputation of a maneater').

**CTq of labelling** (221 AHLU, 109 AMC) implies "attaching negative labels" (Propaganda Analysis) to male characters, pointing out their negative traits, verbalized by AHLU, formed by analogy: *dial-a-dick, baby-talker, doctor-of-all-trades, clam-mouth*.

## 5. Conclusions

Being non-linear, communication in the dramedy operates at two levels: diegetic and extradiegetic, with ad-hoc units serving as aural spectacularity markers (our term). The collective author exploits lexical creativity for the sake of construing "quoted" characters, which justifies a large number of ad-hoc lexical units that reflect the characters' verbal ingenuity (diegetic level) and illocutionary manipulative effect (extradiegetic level). AHLU function in ad-hoc marked contexts, being monologic and polylogic interlocutory exchanges. Interpretation of AHLU is based on tangency points of interlocutors' background knowledge and common associations and values.

From the perspective of a communicative-cognitive paradigm, ad-hoc word-formation in "Sex and the City" is characterized by double intentionality and two-level reality depiction. At the extradiegetic level, AHLU contributes to construing a memorable image of a character, easily associated with the audience due to common values. At a diegetic level, AHLU promotes the characters' expressiveness and their presentation of themselves as self-made brands. The collective author plays with existing language sources to coin lexical formations that attract overhearers' attention and, consequently, emphasize stereotypical female problems.

The two key through-film strategies in the dramedy "Sex and the City" are the communicative strategies of self-presentation and communicative strategy of characterization, with almost equal frequency of occurrence.

The communicative strategy of self-presentation is realized by means of expressive AHLU that form various stylistic devices, mainly figures of quality and quantity, and expressive syntax figures, namely rhetoric questions, further functioning as communicative techniques tactics markers.

Positive self-presentation is represented by a cooperative tactic of positive personal information provision, realized by the communicative techniques of self-branding, exemplification, addressing the overhearer's emotions, as well as evoking the overhearer's associations.

Negative self-presentation is realized by a non-cooperative tactic of negative personal information provision. The tactic is less frequent since all situations in the dramedy are primarily scenes of girl-talk. Characters seldom employ epatage, self-disclosure, and escape from self-disclosure. The least represented is negative politeness. In such a case, AHLU mainly functions as pragmatic discourse markers to convey the characters' attitude towards reality rather than acquiring a new meaning.

The strategy of characterization is realized by a cooperative tactic of positive characterization through "glittering generalities" and bonding based on the jocular treatment of the situation. Labelling and impolite derision verbalize the non-cooperative tactic of characterization. However, both communicative techniques have a jocular undercurrent, mocking hyperbolized stereotypical problems of the female audience. Negative characterization is verbalized by various word-building types that express sarcasm, vulgar Humour, and wit. Given the target audience and genre peculiarities of the dramedy "Sex and the City", tactics of negative characterization are less common.

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