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# MEANING (METAPHOR)-BASED CREATIVITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CHICK LIT

This article explores meaning-based creativity in English language chick lit, a contemporary genre of postfeminist fiction, focusing on the role of metaphor in the formation of creative neologisms. While lexical innovation has often been discussed in terms of form-based (morphological) creativity, the present study foregrounds the cognitive-semantic mechanisms that motivate formally creative coinages. Drawing on the distinction between form-based and meaning-based creativity, the article investigates how metaphor functions as a key source of semantic innovation underlying neologisms in English language chick lit. The study is based on a self-compiled corpus of 36 English language chick lit novels, from which 141 formally creative neologisms were extracted. The article adopts the framework of creative use of metaphor, identifying such mechanisms as the extension of conventional metaphorical mappings, the application of metaphors to targets they are not conventionally associated with, the interaction of metaphor with metonymy in a novel way, the alteration of metaphorical valence, and the introduction of additional detail. Through detailed qualitative analysis, the article demonstrates that meaning(metaphor)-based creativity in chick lit neologisms is not based on entirely novel conceptual mappings. Instead, it typically arises from the elaboration, recombination, or reorientation of entrenched metaphors, which are exploited for humorous, evaluative, and expressive purposes. The findings highlight the embodied and experiential grounding of metaphor-based neologisms and show how they contribute to characterisation, emotional engagement, and social critique. Overall, the study argues that chick lit provides a particularly fertile domain for observing the interplay between form-based and meaning-based creativity in contemporary English word formation.

**Key words:** *chick lit, creative use of metaphor, linguistic creativity, mapping, meaning-based creativity, metaphor.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity permeates every sphere of human activity and finds one of its most potent expressions in language. Its significance is beyond dispute: linguistic creativity is central to identity construction, cultural reflection, and the articulation of emotional experience. Nevertheless, despite its pervasiveness, creativity has long remained on the periphery of mainstream linguistic inquiry, frequently dismissed as too elusive or resistant to systematic analysis.

The present study focuses on lexical creativity, understood as the inventive formation of new lexical units, or neologisms, within English language chick lit. This literary genre is marked by its emphasis on social observation, self-presentation, and a light, playful tone [13, 26].

Lexical creativity is dual in nature, operating at the intersection of formal word-formation processes and cognitive-semantic mechanisms that motivate the choice of particular lexical forms [17]. In other words, creative lexical items are shaped both by the manipulation of linguistic structure (e.g. affixation, blending, phonological play) and by conceptual processes that guide meaning construction (e.g. metaphor, metonymy, and evaluative framing). This duality was memorably captured by L. Collins [8] through the distinction between the "Joyce principle" and the "Juliet principle." The "Joyce principle," named after James Joyce's inventive use of sound and structure, foregrounds the formal (phonological and morphological) aspects of lexical creativity. It thus corresponds to the formal dimension of lexical creativity. The "Juliet principle," inspired by Shakespeare's "What's in a name?" from "Romeo and Juliet," highlights the cognitive-semantic processes underlying meaning construction [33]. It highlights the role of conceptualisation in lexical creativity, resulting in speakers selecting one form over another to convey particular meanings.

Accordingly, lexical innovation can be approached in terms of form-based and meaning-based creativity, which co-evolve in the manufacture of neologisms in English language chick lit (henceforth ELCL).

This article focuses exclusively on meaning-based creativity of neologisms in English language chick lit grounded in metaphor. This choice is motivated by the central role of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism in meaning construction, as widely recognised in cognitive linguistics, and is supported by the author's analysis of lexical creativity in ELCL. The article aims to identify and analyse the metaphorical mappings underlying the formation of creative neologisms in English language chick lit and focuses on the creative use of metaphor, exploring how conventional conceptual metaphors are extended and combined in unexpected ways to produce novel meanings that reflect the genre's humour, emotionality, identity construction, and social commentary.

The o b j e c t i v e s of the study are as follows:

1) to identify the metaphorical mappings underlying formally creative neologisms in ELCL;

2) to single out the types of novel uses of metaphor underlying formally creative neologisms in ELCL;

3) to identify the socio-pragmatic functions performed by metaphor-driven neologisms in ELCL.

The n o v e l t y of this research lies in applying an established cognitive-linguistic framework of metaphor-driven linguistic creativity – previously developed outside literary contexts [26] – to the analysis of neologisms in English language chick lit, and in demonstrating how these mechanisms interact with their socio-pragmatic functions.

The o b j e c t of the study is creative neologisms in ELCL whose meaning is grounded in metaphor. Its s u b j e c t is the types of novel uses of metaphor that underlie the meaning of these neologisms and the ways these mechanisms contribute to the socio-pragmatic functions of the neologisms.

The d a t a for this study come from a self-compiled corpus comprising 36 English language chick lit novels. The analysis identified 141 neologisms, all of which display form-based creativity by deviating from or elaborating established morphological patterns in English. Over a quarter of these neologisms are motivated by underlying metaphorical mappings; it is this subset that forms the focus of the present study.

## 2. TYPES OF MEANING (METAPHOR)-BASED CREATIVITY IN ELCL NEOLOGISMS

T h e o r e t i c a l a n d m e t h o d o l o g i c a l g r o u n d i n g o f t h e s t u d y. Neologisms are broadly understood as lexical units or new meanings not previously recorded in a given language at a particular time [1, 11, 22, 30]. English language chick lit fosters the emergence of new words mainly morphologically. They are deliberately created as alternative to existing forms to affect the communicative potential of the resulting expressions, i.e. perform a facilitative function [18, p. 278]. What enables the facilitative function of neologisms in ELCL is their creativity, which is commonly defined as the combination of novelty and appropriateness [7], meaning that an idea must not only be original but also serve a clear communicative function [31]. In the case of neologisms, newness is inherent by definition. What distinguishes creative neologisms is their appropriateness within discourse. Creative neologisms act as foregrounding devices through which writers position their characters as socially perceptive individuals – those who seek attention, navigate relationships, and aim to be "socially successful with their speech" [14, p. 1056]. Such coinages operate as markers of identity, interpersonal involvement, and socio-discursive stance [24]. Moreover, their expressive force is context-dependent, co-varying with who creates the word, in what setting, and for what purpose [15].

Linguistic creativity operates on two complementary levels: form-based and meaning-based [17, 24, 25, 26].

Morphology is one of the primary domains of form-based creativity in ELCL, providing the structural

foundation for the invention of new words. The study of particularly unconventional morphological formations has given rise to a subfield known as extravagant [10] or extragrammatical [27] morphology which explores coinages that stretch standard morphological rules. Form (morphology)-based creativity is viewed as a cline [7] extending from F(ixed) to E(xtended) to X creativity – lexical formations that resist classification, lack reproducibility, and exhibit no clear derivational path [4, 15, 16, 19, 23, 29].

Meaning-based creativity, on the other hand, arises from the creative use of cognitive-linguistic operations, including metaphor [24, 25, 26].

Previously regarded as language decorum, a matter of rhetoric and literary approaches, metaphor departs radically from traditional view within conceptual metaphor theory positioning it as an interaction model building an associative imagery between two different conceptual structures – a conceptual mapping between discrete conceptual domains, source and target [21]. Associations between two domains that are more or less original signal the conventionality of metaphor: socially stable correspondences between domains are conventional (or dead) whereas unusual source-target domains are unconventional (or novel/creative) [6, 12, 21, 26, 32].

As argued by Zoltan Kövecses [20], the creation of novel metaphors is prompted by a range of situational and discourse factors that together constitute both the local and global context. In diverse contexts, novel metaphors can be used to disrupt prevailing thinking, challenge the status quo, or critique dominant practices. Recent research [6, 12, 26, 32] has shown that creative metaphors are particularly effective for expressing evaluation, especially negative evaluation, in comparison with conventional metaphors.

In Kövecses' [20, p. 212] and Mario Brdar's [5] accounts, metaphorical "newness" from a cognitive perspective rests on the idea that conventional correspondences (mappings) exist between well-established source and target domains and new metaphoric expressions arise when new mappings are added to these conventional pairings. However, more recent empirical research suggests that in most cases of metaphorical creativity at the level of linguistic expression, the underlying novelty lies not in the creation of entirely new conceptual mappings but in the elaboration or exploitation of the entailments of existing ones [24, p. 108]. Moreover, these studies have shown that to interpret a creative metaphor, the reader or listener must ultimately draw on some form of conventional mapping and/or mapping adjunct [2, 3, as cited in 24, p. 110]. In other words, all creative expressions depend on a baseline of conventionality at some level of abstraction, which is then reshaped or extended in novel ways [24, p. 110]. For this reason, Littlemore et al. [26] argue that it is more accurate to speak not of purely 'novel metaphor' but of the 'creative use of metaphor.'

Drawing from conversations about work, Littlemore et al. [26] distinguished the following types of creative uses of metaphor at the conceptual level: (a) an extension of a conventional metaphorical mapping; b) using a metaphor to talk about something that it's not usually used to talk about, c) employing a metaphor that interacts with metonymy in a novel way; d) altering the valence of a conventional metaphor; e) introducing more detail into a conventional metaphorical mapping.

I will further demonstrate how these types of creative uses of metaphor are employed in the manufacture of neologisms in ELCL.

An extension of a conventional metaphorical mapping. This is evidenced in the following extract:

(1) *People talk about generation gap.* ***Generation chasm****, more like.* ***Generation Grand Canyon*** [36, p. 13].

In (1), the narrator comments on the perceived distance between different age groups, highlighting differences in attitudes, values, or experiences. The compound noun *generation gap* is attested in English and is grounded in the metaphorical mapping INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE is PHYSICAL DISTANCE, where a physical gap or space serves as the source domain, while the target domain is social, cultural, or experiential differences between generations.

In this extract, the conventional metaphor is extended creatively in two ways. First, *generation chasm* evokes a much deeper, more dramatic divide than a simple "gap," suggesting difficulty of crossing and almost insurmountable separation. *Generation Grand Canyon* amplifies this effect even further, invoking one of the world's largest and most visually striking canyons to represent extreme generational distance. Conceptually, the mapping works as follows: a gap corresponds to standard intergenerational differences; a chasm corresponds to significant cultural or attitudinal differences; and the Grand Canyon corresponds to an extreme, almost comically large generational divide.

The escalating sequence – gap → chasm → Grand Canyon – not only enhances the vividness and humour of the expression but also performs a socio-pragmatic function: it signals the narrator's evaluative stance, frames the generational divide as both cognitively salient and socially meaningful, and invites the audience to share in the humor and perspective of the narrator.

Using a metaphor to talk about something that it's not usually used to talk about.

In everyday sexist language, women are often compared to cars, drawing on conventional mappings that emphasise appearance, value, and desirability. Examples include phrases such as *She's a sleek BMW* [9] highlighting style and status; *That one's a fixer-upper* [8] suggesting that effort is needed to make her desirable; *Don't buy a lemon* [8] implying unreliability; *She's fully loaded* [8] connoting possession of all socially valued attributes, often in a sexualised sense. These metaphors reduce women to objects assessed according to their visual appeal, performance, or marketable traits, and

they are widely recognised within English, making them conventional in nature.

A similar example is found in Fielding [34, p. 21]:

(2) *Jude had been to the gym where she ended up reading some articles calling single girls over thirty* ***'re-treads'****.*

*The guy was arguing that the sort of girls who wouldn't go out with him in their twenties would go out with him now but he didn't want them any more,' she said sadly. 'He said they were all obsessed with settling down and babies and his rule with girls now was "Nothing over twenty-five".'*

*'Oh, honestly!' I laughed gaily trying to fight a lurch of insecurity in my own stomach. 'That's just complete bollocks. No one thinks you're a* ***re-tread****. Think of all those merchant bankers who've been ringing you up. What about Stacey and Johnny?'*

The metaphor used in this passage, however, – *single girls over thirty are 're-treads* – works differently. Tyres are not typically used to describe women, and the idea of a retreaded tyre ('an old tyre given a new rubber surface') is not part of conventional sexist vocabulary. As Littlemore et al. [26] note, this is an example of a creative use of metaphor: using a metaphor to talk about something it is not usually used to talk about. This renders the metaphor novel and striking. The unfamiliarity of the *re-tread* image makes its evaluative force salient, foregrounding its harshness.

The metaphor draws on key features of retreaded tyres and maps them onto women over thirty. Retreaded tyres are previously used and no longer new, and this corresponds to women who have had past relationships or accumulated life experience. They receive a new rubber surface, which parallels women's investment in "upgrades" such as salon treatments, fashionable clothing, or other forms of self-care. Although retreaded tyres remain functional, they are generally devalued in comparison with new ones; similarly, the women in the passage can still be "used" but are regarded as less valuable than their younger counterparts. In addition, the man in the passage claims that these women are now *obsessed with settling down and babies,* which reinforces the metaphorical framing of them as products that come with added "demands" or "conditions," further contributing to their perceived depreciation in the dating marketplace. Finally, retreads are viewed as "second-hand" by buyers, a perception that mirrors the way men in the dating market view these women as "no longer new" despite their continued viability. In this way, the metaphor positions women as used but cosmetically refreshed – "upgraded" through grooming or fashion in an effort to remain competitive within a dating "market."

Socio-pragmatically, the metaphor performs several functions: it signals the male character's ageist and objectifying worldview, conveys the pervasive marketplace logic of dating, and positions women within a system of social evaluation based on youth and perceived novelty. For the female characters, the metaphor also generates emotional and interpersonal effects: Jude's sadness reflects the real psychological impact of these cultural judgements, while Bridget's "laugh gaily" response signals both resistance and self-conscious negotiation of social norms. In this way, the metaphor does more than describe – it enacts social meaning, frames evaluative stances, and engages the reader in reflecting on gendered assumptions.

What is also interesting is how *re-tread* becomes the basis for further wordplay in the dialogue that follows. After her conversation with Jude, Bridget repeats the word to her boyfriend, Mark Darcy:

(3) *'Am I a* ***re-tread?****' I said sleepily as he leaned over to blow out the candle.*

*'****A retard****? No, darling,' he said, patting my bottom reassuringly. 'A little strange, perhaps, but not* ***a retard***' [34, pp. 24–25].

Here, the neologism enters a second phase of meaning-making – one grounded in phonetic ambiguity and pragmatic misunderstanding. Mark mishears *re-tread* as *retard*, reinterpreting Bridget's anxious self-questioning as a comment on her intelligence rather than her romantic status. This miscommunication generates humour through a clash of interpretive frames: Bridget's existential reflection on ageing and desirability collides with Mark's literal, almost childlike reassurance.

From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, this moment shows how novel metaphorical coinages can slip into metapragmatic play, where their very unfamiliarity opens space for reinterpretation. Because *re-tread* is not part of the shared lexicon, its sound structure rather than its conceptual content becomes salient, prompting a phonological association (*re-tread* → *retard*). The humour arises from the layering of meanings – the failed attempt at self-definition becomes a comic misunderstanding that simultaneously exposes and defuses Bridget's insecurity.

Another example of metaphor which is applied to talk about something that it's not usually used to talk about is the narrator's description of the man whose face looks like he takes it to "face gym":

(4) *A good looking guy, it has to be said. His face looks like maybe he takes it to* ***'face gym'*** *to sculpt it every week. There are cheekbones and contours going on. There's some stubble. Intense dark eyes* [39, p. 48].

In (4), a man's face is described as a sculptable object. It is conventional in English to talk about the human body – and the face in particular – using this metaphor, as in *sculpted abs, chiseled jawline, carved cheekbones, chiseled torso,* and *angled brows* [8]. In this metaphor, the source domain is RAW MATERIAL, which can be shaped, chiseled, polished, or refined using tools and skill. The target domain is THE HUMAN BODY, including muscles, facial features, and other aspects of appearance, which are understood as malleable and improvable through effort, training, or grooming.

In the excerpt under discussion, however, the face is conceptualised as something that can be "trained" in an imaginable "face gym" to achieve a polished, chiseled look through effort, rather than as a natural part of a person. The effect is humorous but slightly objectifying, highlighting how contemporary beauty culture encourages individuals to view even their faces as modifiable products that require ongoing maintenance.

Socio-pragmatically, this metaphor performs several functions. It signals the narrator's evaluative stance, combining admiration with playful irony, and draws on shared cultural knowledge of fitness culture and self-optimisation discourse. At the same time, it foregrounds contemporary beauty ideologies, in which appearance is framed as a project requiring continuous labour and self-discipline. By extending the metaphor to the face, the passage intensifies the commodification of the body, positioning even inherently fixed features as objects of improvement and maintenance. The humorous exaggeration engages the reader, while simultaneously inviting critical reflection on the pressures of aesthetic perfection in modern social life

Another example is worth describing:

(5) *Her 'real' job was acting. But the universe* ***drip-dripped*** *work for her, in exquisitely calibrated amounts, keeping her forever on a knife-edge of uncertainty. Every time she was on the verge of giving up, she got thrown a small part, just enough to resuscitate her hope* [37, pp. 2–3].

In (5), *drip-drip* is a metaphorical expression grounded in the source domain of WATER, used to conceptualise the sporadic and insufficient flow of career opportunities. The image evokes a slow, irregular dripping of liquid, connoting scarcity, delay, and frustration. It is not unconventional in English to describe the minimal or rationed provisions in terms of dripping water (cf. *The government provided help only in dribs and drabs* [8]). This metaphor can also extend to emotional or existential scarcity, as in expressions such as *affection came in drips* [8], where an intangible human need is conceptualised as a substance distributed unevenly over time. Conventionally, the source of the "drip" (the provider) is a human or institutional actor – someone consciously limiting supply.

What makes the usage of *drip-drip* creative is the application of this conventional metaphor to something it is not usually applied to – a non-human, abstract agent – the universe. In other words, the author personifies the universe as an intentional distributor, "drip-dripping" work in "exquisitely calibrated amounts." This not only anthropomorphises fate but also infuses it with a sense of deliberate irony, as if some higher powers were cruelly rationing hope. Socio-pragmatically, the metaphor constructs the narrator's experience of precarity as externally controlled and ironically "managed" by fate, thereby conveying frustration, inviting reader empathy, and framing uncertainty as both emotionally taxing and darkly humorous.

Employing a metaphor that interacts with metonymy in a novel way. One example of this is (6):

(6) *If we had* ***a testosterone-meter*** *hanging on the kitchen wall the mercury level would have gone through the ceiling* [36, p. 41].

In (6), the female protagonist comments on her sister's male friend's sexuality. To convey this, she invents a new word – *testosterone-meter* – that denotes an imaginary instrument which could measure the level of testosterone.

The *testosterone-meter* functions as a metaphor interacting with metonymy. First, testosterone metonymically stands for sexuality. This is a conventional metonymic mapping in English. For example, phrases like *high-testosterone male*, *bursting with testosterone*, or *full of male hormones* [8] all use testosterone to represent traits such as aggression, dominance, or sexual drive.

The metaphor then extends this mapping further by treating sexuality as a measurable quantity. While it is common to talk about sexuality qualitatively – for instance, *high sex drive / low sex drive*, *libido is strong / weak*, or *full of sexual energy* [8] – it is unusual to describe it in terms of its level rising and falling on a scale, like mercury in a thermometer or barometer. Functionally, the exaggerated image of the mercury "going through the ceiling" in (6) amplifies the comic effect and engages the reader through playful hyperbole and shared cultural assumptions about gender.

Altering the valence of a conventional metaphor. Evidence for this can be seen in the following extract:

(7) *Maybe you don't know it but you don't return to normal living and, more importantly, normal clothes the moment you give birth.*

*No indeed!*

*It's a long time before certain bodily processes stop. I don't want to sound unnecessary gory here but I just say that I could have given Lady Macbeth a run for her money.*

*Don't talk to me about blood being everywhere, Missus!*

*And because of that I'd had to wear these funny mesh paper-type knickers.*

*They were horrible and they were huge.*

***Armpit huggers*** [36, pp. 276–277].

In this extract, the narrator humorously describes the unglamorous realities of postpartum recovery, referring to the large disposable underwear she had to put on as *armpit huggers.* This expression exemplifies a creative use of metaphor achieved through an alteration of the valence of a conventional primary metaphor. The underlying primary metaphor is PHYSICAL EMBRACE is COMFORT AND PROTECTION, grounded in the embodied experience of being held or hugged – an act that conveys warmth, safety, and affection. This metaphor is reflected in conventional expressions in English such as *wrap yourself in a blanket*, *hold someone close*, *cocoon yourself*, *nestle into someone's arms*, and *cradle your fears* [8], where physical embrace is mapped onto emotional or psychological security.

This metaphor can also be applied to clothing. Conventional metaphorical expressions using *hug* in this context – for example, *hugging jeans*, *hugging dress*, or *hug your curves* [8] – typically carry positive connotations. In these cases, the garment is conceptualised as embracing the wearer's body, providing both comfort and aesthetic enhancement, extending the embodied sense of safety and warmth from people to objects.

In *armpit huggers*, however, this valence is reversed. The metaphor retains the embodied sense of tight physical contact, but the affective dimension shifts from comfort to discomfort, confinement, and humiliation. Instead of protection, the "hug" becomes intrusive and excessive, reaching absurd proportions – so much so that the underwear metaphorically "hugs" not just the hips or waist but all the way up to the armpits.

Pragmatically, the metaphor performs several functions characteristic of chick lit: it generates humour through hyperbolic exaggeration, defusing the taboo surrounding postpartum bodies; it enables self-deprecating empowerment, allowing the narrator to reclaim agency over bodily vulnerability; and it fosters reader solidarity by inviting shared recognition and normalising an otherwise private and potentially shameful experience.

Introducing more detail into a conventional metaphorical expression or mapping. This can be observed in the following example:

(8) *Yayy! Have broken through 150lb* ***glass floor*** *(though may have been through standing on one leg and slightly leaning on washbasin* [35, p. 56].

In (8), the neologism *glass floor* plays off the conventional metaphor of the "glass ceiling," which is widely used to describe an invisible, socially constructed barrier preventing women or minority groups from advancing beyond a certain level (in work, status, or achievement). By contrast, in the analysed extract the metaphorical direction is reversed to create the idea of a glass floor – an invisible lower boundary representing a personal weight limit. In Bridget Jones' world, this "floor" marks the lowest (i.e., slimmest) she has managed to reach. This inversion, or "flip side" [26, p. 33], reveals a creative use of a conventional metaphoric mapping.

Conventionally, "breaking through" a barrier like a "glass ceiling" signifies upward progress or achievement. Here, however, *breaking through a glass floor* humorously implies moving "downward," a contradiction that produces both irony and comic self-awareness. The expression draws on an embodied conceptual schema in which limits are physical barriers (walls, ceilings, or floors) and progress or change is vertical movement. By flipping this schema, the author revitalises a familiar metaphorical structure to fit the context of dieting and body image.

The pragmatic effect of *glass floor* is twofold. On one level, it reflects Bridget's self-deprecating humour: she celebrates her weight loss as if it were a grand achievement, even while jokingly admitting that she "cheated" by leaning on the washbasin. On another level, it offers a subtle critique of societal pressures surrounding women's bodies, where success is measured by ever-decreasing numbers on the scale. Thus, the metaphor encapsulates both the embodied logic of physical constraint and the cultural absurdity of striving toward unattainable ideals.

I will now describe another illustrative example:

(9) *'Call him back,' screamed Sharon like an SS torturer. 'Call him back and ask him to meet you in the fountain. OhmyGod.'*

*The phone had rung again, we stood there rigid, mouths open. Then Tom's voice boomed out, 'Hello, you pretty little things, it's Mr Darcy here just calling to see if anyone could help me out of this wet shirt.'*

*Shazzer suddenly* ***detranced****. 'Stop him, stop him,' she screamed, flinging herself at the receiver. 'Shut up, Tom, shut up, shut up, shut up* [34, p. 160].

A trance is a psychological state, and states are conventionally conceptualised as containers in English (the CONTAINER metaphor). People are said *to fall into a trance*, *enter a state of shock*, or *sink into despair* [8], reflecting the idea that mental states are spaces one can occupy. Similarly, they can *come out of a trance*, *emerge from depression*, or *snap out of it* [8], implying that one can leave these containers. Typically, entering a state may be passive (a force or event causes one to enter) or active (one deliberately enters it), depending on the context.

In the case of Fielding's [34] passage, when Shazzer *detrances*, we can infer that she had previously *entranced*, i.e. was caused to be in a particular state. By using the neologism *detrance*, the text conveys that Shazzer actively removes herself from the trance state, rather than merely drifting out of it. The coinage emphasises the suddenness and agency of her mental shift, highlighting her abrupt transition from stunned attention or absorption to panicked, frenzied reaction. In the given context, *detrance* thus functions as a creative use of metaphor, extending the conventional container mapping with a new detail: one can remove oneself from the container.

Functionally, the neologism *detrance* heightens the dramatic immediacy of the scene and contributes to the humorous, exaggerated tone characteristic of chick lit by rendering an internal psychological transition as a vivid, almost physical action.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated that formally creative neologisms in English language chick lit are systematically grounded in metaphorical mappings, most prominently those relating abstract social and psychological experiences to more concrete embodied domains such as physical space, material objects, and measurable quantities. These mappings provide the conceptual foundation upon which lexical innovation

is built, confirming that meaning (metaphor)-based creativity plays a prominent role in motivating formally novel expressions.

Furthermore, the analysis has shown that these neologisms arise through a limited but productive set of novel metaphorical uses. While these mechanisms are not unique to English discourse, their deployment in chick lit highlights the genre's preference for exaggeration, playfulness, and experiential immediacy.

Finally, the study has established that metaphor-driven neologisms perform a range of socio-pragmatic functions. They serve to generate humour, express evaluation, construct character perspective, and foster reader engagement and solidarity. At the same time, they often foreground and critically reflect broader social meanings, including gender norms, body politics, and interpersonal dynamics. In this way, lexical creativity in chick lit emerges not merely as a stylistic embellishment but as a functional resource for negotiating social experience and shaping discourse.

Overall, the findings confirm that lexical creativity in English language chick lit is a multidimensional phenomenon in which formal innovation, metaphorical conceptualisation, and socio-pragmatic purpose interact in a systematic and meaningful way.

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## СМИСЛОВА (МЕТАФОРИЧНА) КРЕАТИВНІСТЬ В АНГЛОМОВНІЙ ЧІК-ЛІТ

У статті досліджується смислова креативність неологізмів в англомовній чік-літ (від англ. literature for chicks), сучасному жанрі постфеміністичної художньої літератури, із фокусом на ролі метафори у формуванні нових лексичних одиниць. Хоча лексична креативність традиційно описується крізь призму формальної (морфологічної) креативності, у цій розвідці акцент перенесено на когнітивно-семантичні механізми, що лежать в основі формально креативних словотворчих інновацій. Матеріалом дослідження слугує самостійно укладений корпус із 36 англомовних романів жанру чік-літ, у межах якого було виявлено 141 формально креативний неологізм. Теоретичною основою дослідження слугує типологія креативних уживань метафори. У статті розглянуто такі типи метафоричної креативності, як розширення конвенційного метафоричного мапування, застосування метафор до нетипових цільових доменів, взаємодія метафори й метонімії, зміна оцінної валентності, а також деталізація метафоричного мапування. У результаті доведено, що смислова (метафорична) креативність неологізмів у чік-літ не ґрунтується на повністю нових концептуальних мапуваннях. Натомість вона виникає через творчу експлуатацію, переорієнтацію або комбінування усталених метафор, які використовуються для досягнення гумористичного, оцінного та експресивного ефектів. Отримані результати засвідчують тілесно-досвідну природу метафоричної креативності та її вагому роль у конструюванні ідентичності персонажів, емоційної залученості читача й соціальної критики в жанрі чік-літ.

**Ключові слова:** *креативне уживання метафори, лінгвістична креативність, мапування, метафора, смислова креативність, чік літ.*

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