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# The Essence of Occasionalism and its Study in Ontologics

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of occasionalism represents one of the most dynamic aspects of lexical innovation, yet its operational mechanisms in early language development require deeper academic systematization. This article explores the conceptual essence of occasional units, specifically examining their generation within child speech through the lens of modern ontolinguistics. By evaluating established linguistic and psycholinguistic paradigms, the paper provides a rigorous critical critique of how children intuitively exploit the structural rules of their native language to coin context-dependent neologisms. The analysis demonstrates that child occasionalisms serve as a prime manifestation of speech creativity and linguistic resilience. Ultimately, the paper establishes the theoretical importance of evaluating these transient units and contributes a refined framework for understanding structural morphology and cognitive processing in developmental linguistics.

**Keywords:** Child Occasionalisms, Ad-Hoc Coinages, Linguacreative Potential, Language Ontogeny, Child Speech Analysis, Mental Lexicon, Structural Morphology, Psycholinguistics

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## 1. Introduction

As an essential component of speech activity, occasionalism embodies the creative potential of language. Occasional units are significant because they provide information about the specific aspects of a speaker's linguistic and creative thinking and serve to satisfy the communicative need associated with naming events and phenomena during the process of communication. In lexicographical sources, occasionalism is defined as "a word formed based on a non-productive model and used only within that specific speech text, an individual-stylistic neologism" [1], "non-usual, not corresponding to the commonly used form, possessing an individual nature, and based on usage within a specific context" [2], and "a one-time word invented for a special occasion" [3]. In O. S. Akhmanova's dictionary, occasionalism is interpreted as a phenomenon identical to *hapax legomenon* in terms of being used once for a specific situation [4]. Therefore, aspects such as non-usuality, individuality, and context-based actualization are characteristic of occasionalism.

## Literature Review

In the initial studies on the essence of this phenomenon, the analysis of occasional units specific to the style of a certain creative writer was carried out systematically, and the issue was approached from a linguopoetic point of view. As an example, one can cite the monographic studies dedicated to the word-formation features of occasional units found in the creative works of V. V. Mayakovsky and A. P. Chekhov, authored by Er. Khanpira, T. Y. Vorobyeva, and Y. A. Jigareva [5]. Through the analysis of available

sources, a linguopoetic approach to the study of this phenomenon was also observed in the research conducted at the beginning of the 21st century by D. B. Maslennikov, O. A. Golovachyeva, Y. A. Belousova, M. Y. Narinskaya, A. Y. Astafyev, I. G. Gorovaya, D. O. Morozov, Y. I. Jabayeva, O. S. Shuvalova, and Y. S. Stepashkina [6].

The earliest views regarding the ontolinguistic interpretation of occasionalisms are found in the research carried out by T. A. Gridina and S. N. Tseytlin. In their studies, the linguistic and cognitive aspects of occasionalisms were revealed through the structural, derivational, and morphological analysis of occasional units characteristic of child speech [7].

## 2. Materials and Methods

N. G. Ozerova, on the other hand, analyzes two-root expressions occurring in child speech as complex occasional words. In her work, the term *composite* is used as an alternative to the term compound word. She interprets occasionalisms in the form of derived words manifesting in child speech as a unique intersection formed at the crossroads of word formation, child speech, and theories about occasional words.[8] It is noted that child occasionalisms are not only interesting from the point of view of their poetic creativity, but because these units have the capacity to fully convey the speaker's intention, perlocutionary, and presuppositional information, they can be used as an object in solving important problems of cognitive linguistics.[9] Indeed, as N. G. Ozerova points out, occasional units specific to child speech serve as an important linguistic source in studying the realization of the speaker's intention and the propositional, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, and presuppositional acts. However, these aspects are problems studied within the scope of pragmalinguistics, not cognitive linguistics.[10] As a result of the structural, morphological, and derivational analyses of occasional units related to child speech carried out by the scholar, theoretical conclusions were reached stating that the initial forms of noun occasionalisms created by compounding appear at the age of three, this situation reaches its highest peak at the age of five (49.87%), and occasionalisms of the ontogenesis period are formed through contamination, gendiadis, and substitution [11].

The results of N. O. Kovalevich's research also confirm the conclusion about the emergence of occasionalisms based on derivation and composition at the preschool age [12]. According to the author, the expression of occasionalism in children's communication is considered an integral part of their speech. It is noted that formation through the two mentioned methods is observed in the early and middle stages of the preschool age period, that is, from 3–4 to 5–6 years of age, and the active participation of composition is encountered especially in the upper stage of the preschool age period, that is, at 6–7 years of age.[13] Furthermore, she notes that the range of occasionalisms related to child speech also includes units formed by methods not characteristic of usual word formation, among which the amount of contamination and re-etymologization is large, and the first contaminated words are observed at a very early age period at 3 years of age.[14] The preschool age period is characterized by the involuntary emergence of occasionalisms, that is, without taking semantic-formal features into account. As the child grows older, the qualitative indicator of occasionalisms observed in their speech changes. By the age of 6–7, the child begins to use occasional units as a result of the need to increase expressiveness and to find a way out of a situation [15]. It is worth noting that I. G. Ozerova, while speaking about the functional characteristics of child occasionalisms, also notes that the nominative function plays a leading role in them, and this process arises in the child due to the need to precisely express an object, attribute, or action, with this situation being widely encountered, especially in the 5–7 age period, 49.69%. It is stated that the child's need for naming arises on the basis of reasons such as not knowing the usual name of the object, striving to express a new object during a game, and indicating an intermediate state between objects, attributes, and actions. Additionally, the evaluative and aesthetic

functions of occasionalisms are clearly manifested in this process [17]. These views show that the approach of I. G. Ozerova and N. O. Kovalevich in interpreting child occasionalisms and defining their functions is built upon a common idea.

In the views of V. V. Gorbunova and Z. Y. Perfilyeva regarding this issue, just like in N. O. Kovalevich's view, the interpretation of child occasionalisms as involuntarily actualized units is observed. While analyzing the opinions of T. B. Radbil in this regard, the authors note that occasionalism was described as a "word-formation anomaly," and according to T. B. Radbil, the essence of occasionalism can be understood more deeply by analyzing the cases of language errors and deviations from the norm.[16] At the same time, they interpret the occasional unit as a personal word involuntarily created by the child. Analyzing this process from a functional point of view allows for the clear manifestation of the property of language as a self-organizing system and makes it possible to visualize the child's text-generation ability as a holistic picture [17]. The results of the positional analysis carried out by the researchers make it possible to interpret child occasionalisms not as a simple lexical unit or an involuntarily occurring phenomenon, but as a structural-functional segment of the text. Depending on which position in the text it occupies, the intended goal behind it becomes clearer.[18]

### 3. Results and Discussion

While N. O. Kovalevich, V. V. Gorbunova, and Z. Y. Perfilyeva evaluated the preschool age period as a period of involuntary emergence of occasionalisms, Y. N. Kononova, relying on the opinion of A. G. Lykov, describes occasional units observed in the spontaneous speech of a child as units formed in a conditionally conscious manner. It is noted that this approach provides an opportunity to obtain general and unique information about the word-creation mechanisms of the child, who is a "language discoverer." The author points out that children's occasionalisms are evaluated as a combination of contradictory features, such as innovation–stereotypicality and creativity–patternedness. Through this, she synthesizes various views in the study of occasionalisms, in particular, the conclusions given by some researchers that child occasionalisms emerge as a result of individual creative activity, and by others that they are formed only based on a change in form while relying on existing patterns in the language. At the same time, she notes that diversity is also observed in the terminological expression of the product of speech creativity in this process, pointing out that "children's proverbs" K. I. Chukovsky, "child neologisms" T. N. Ushakova, "neologism" N. I. Lepskaya, "occasional word" L. M. Gyulverdiyeva, U. M. Trofimova, "children's words" V. K. Kharchenko, and "child speech innovations" S. N. Tseytlin are widely used in research in this regard. She emphasizes the absence of a special term that clearly distinguishes children's innovations from word creativity and proposes to introduce a new terminological unit, "ontoneologism," to express occasional words peculiar to children [19].

An approach to child occasionalisms as a product of conscious creative thinking is also reflected in the research of G. R. Dobrova. She emphasizes that through occasional units, "how a child can independently construct an individual linguistic system is clearly demonstrated." In the study on whether children pay attention to semantics or form formation when creating new words, the term occasionalism was applied to their creative product.[20] The interchangeable use of the terms innovation and occasionalism as synonyms by the scholar is observed. A precise explanation regarding the definition of the term's boundaries is not encountered in the study. In our opinion, innovation was used by G. R. Dobrova as a process or phenomenon that brings about occasionalism, while occasionalism was used as the product of creativity [21].

### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, occasionalisms are considered a linguistic source carrying important information regarding the unique aspects of children's linguistic-creative activity and the

specific features of the ontogenesis process. In world linguistics, occasional units related to child speech have been interpreted as a product of speech creativity that emerges either involuntarily or consciously and serves to satisfy a specific communicative need of the child. These interpretations carry special significance in researching the mental and cognitive aspects of occasionalisms and can serve as a basis for putting forward new theories related to the issue in linguistics.

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