

Does It Take Two to Do an Articulatory Tango? Investigating the Production of Novel Phonetic Forms in Varying Communicative Settings¹

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Successful communication sometimes necessitates creative linguistic solutions. Although speakers are flexible in their choices, they rely on overused planning procedures. Deviating from common pathways requires additional cognitive resources and a good reason for doing so. Current models of word production mainly focus on modelling language behaviour in monologues, falling short of capturing the linguistic innovations that occur in every-day dialogue. In this explorative study, we are interested in speakers' use of novel forms in varying communicative settings, testing the influence of task, setting, familiarity, syllable frequency and personality traits. Analyzing global phonetic/prosodic features, we find differences between monologues and dialogues within the same speaker on the same task and between different dialogue tasks as well as an effect of individual differences in personality traits. Furthermore, we find signs of increased involvement –or chattiness– in a linguistically easier spot-the-difference game. Lower fundamental frequency ranges in tasks which require more attention to the form, hint at a higher cognitive load. We observe a higher proportion of low-frequency target syllables produced as novel forms and a higher degree of high-frequency syllables produced in canonical patterns. Thus, supporting our expectation of low-frequency syllables to be more susceptible to creative processes than high-frequency syllables.

¹ This talk has been presented at SemDial 2025 as a long paper:

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