Towards Operationalizing Linguistic Creativity in Literary and Non-literary Text

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LINGUISTIC CREATIVITY in Communication
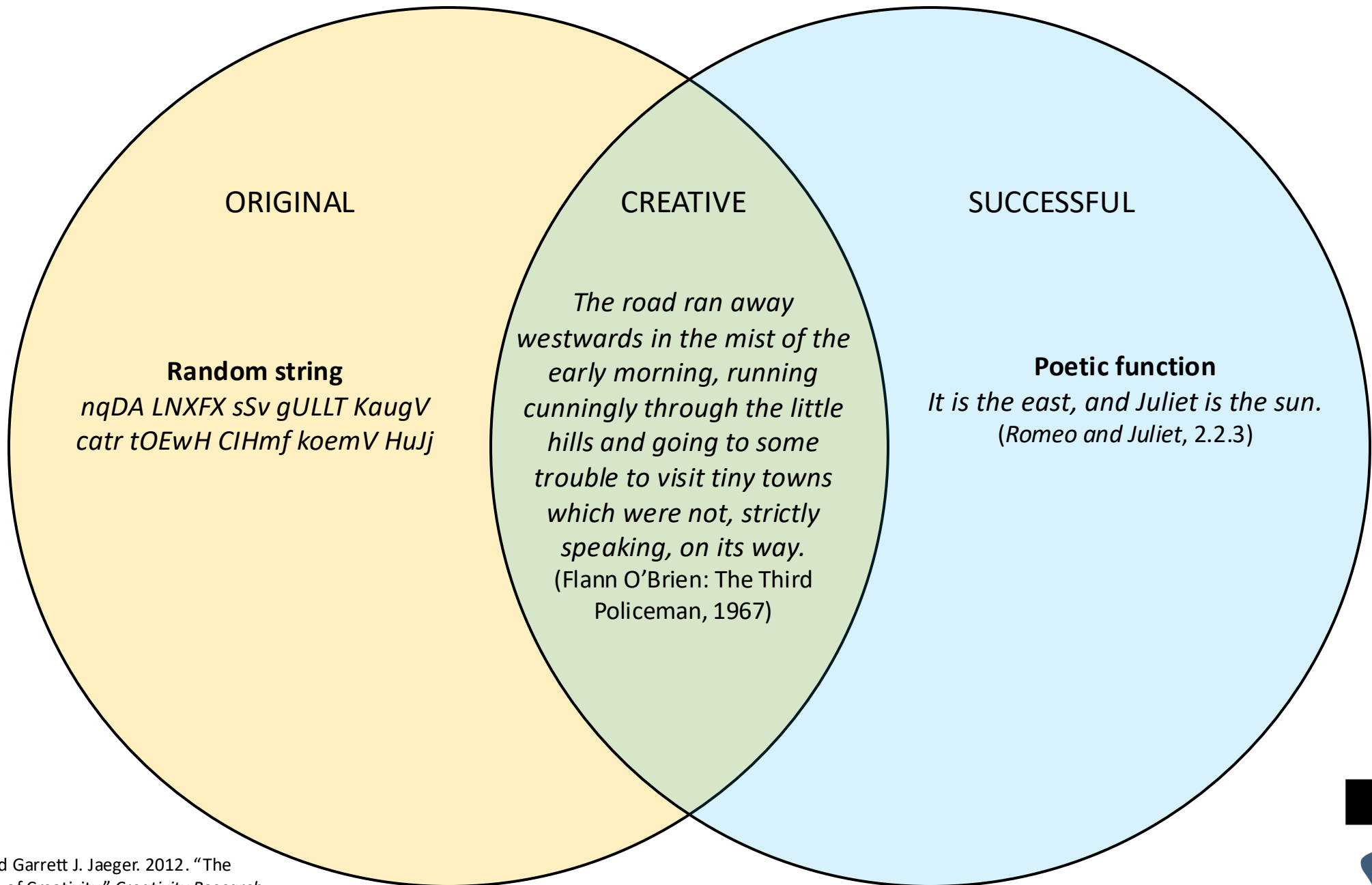SFB 1646

What we are interested in

- What makes a text literary and poetic?

- What makes a text creative?

- How to disentangle creativity from a literary style?

- How to detect and measure creative language use?

- How to take into account the context?

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Literariness

- Level of the sign (formalist definition)
- Foregrounding/rhetorical devices
- Literary style, poeticity
- Context-independent, text-inherent literariness

Creativity

- Level of usage (reception)
- Context-dependent

ORIGINAL

CREATIVE

SUCCESSFUL

Random string
*nqDA LNXFX sSv gULLT KaugV
catr tOEwH CIHmf koemV HuJj*

The road ran away westwards in the mist of the early morning, running cunningly through the little hills and going to some trouble to visit tiny towns which were not, strictly speaking, on its way.
(Flann O'Brien: The Third Policeman, 1967)

Poetic function
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
(*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.3)

Runco, Mark A., and Garrett J. Jaeger. 2012. "The Standard Definition of Creativity." *Creativity Research Journal* 24 (1): 92–96.

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Literariness

- Level of the sign (formalist definition)
- Foregrounding/rhetorical devices
- Literary style, poeticity
- Context-independent, text-inherent literariness

- Not necessarily original

→ Only potentially creative

Creativity

- Level of usage (reception)
- Context-dependent

- Successful (meaningful, fulfilling a poetic function)

- Original

Corpus

- Literary and non-literary texts

- Currently, we work with around 37,000 literary German full texts

- Mainly 19th century

- German and potentially other languages

- Spatial descriptions on sentence- and paragraph level
  - The passage is static, no immediate actions
  - The described object is sensory perceptible
  - The described object could be real in the narrated world

*[The sea] was almost motionless, for the **winds were hushed**, and all nature reposed under the eye of the quiet moon. A few fishing vessels alone specked the water, and now and then the **gentle breeze** wafted the sound of voices as the **fishermen called to one another**.*
(Mary Shelley: Frankenstein (1818), Chapter 20)

How to measure linguistic creativity?

I am looking forward to hearing your ideas!

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