

# English Zero Derivation Revisited: Nouning and Verbing in Online Business Articles

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## Abstract

Zero derivation is a word-formation process when from a word in a certain lexical (sub)category by adding a zero derivational affix, but with allowed inflectional interventions, another, new lexeme is created, with absolutely same form (from a derivational point of view); similar, expanded meaning; and, most importantly, belonging to a different lexical (sub)category. The analytical structure of English makes this a very frequent, productive, and economic process, across almost all categories, with the *noun* to *verb* and the *verb* to *noun* directions marking the most common process formations. Yet, regardless of the direction, the newly formed, zero derived lexeme belongs to a different lexical (sub)category not only based on the same form but on the similar semantics that the old and the new lexemes share, due to the meaning transfer through cognition. Having seen that the process of zero derivation is present and widespread in everyday life, this paper aims at researching its presence and productivity in online business articles, that is, in online texts which discuss business topics. Online media have been chosen since its quest for timely information requires fast expression and, in such a need, quick word-formation processes, like zero derivation, are in place, making the expression formally short but semantically expanded. Therefore, it is the cognitive transfer of meaning that drives the process. Similar to the reason for selecting online media, business articles have been used as a corpus, to show what language is used when discussing non-language-centred topics, that is, business.

**Keywords:** online business articles, cognition, meaning transfer, nouns, verbs, zero-derivation

## 1. Introduction

The paper aims to revisit the two directions of the English zero derivation process: from a *noun* to a *verb*, and from a *verb* to a *noun* in online business articles, by exploring the productivity of this process, analysing the usage of the zero derived words in online business contexts, and understanding the speaker's motivation behind these semantically-driven formations.

Thus, our research questions are the following:

- 1) Are a noun to verb and a verb to noun zero derivations in online business articles as productively used as in the other genres and media?
- 2) Is there merely a straightforward semantic transfer from one to another lexeme, or there is also, or even more present, a metaphorical expansion that drives the process?

To answer these questions, we will first define and explain the process of zero derivation in general, discuss its place in the word-formation discipline, then elaborate on this phenomenon in English, explain the significance of cognition in understanding and realising the process, then outline researchers' opinions and studies on this topic, present our corpus and explain the method that we will use in analysing the data, offer corpus discussion and finish with the research findings.

As a scientific discipline, word formation studies and describes words that are motivated by this process, and those are lexemes which, by form and content, are created from other same-root words. Thus, zero derivation is a

process for creating new words in the language, while its direct subject of study is the word, that is, its structure related to another, similar motivation-related word. Yet, word-formation does not only discover ways of creating words, but it also classifies the resulting words according to their common characteristics and determines the word-formation categories and types, as well as their actual use in the language. In this way, it discovers the whole word-formation language system and establishes the norms for its functioning.

Traditionally, this process is part of grammar, in this case, morphology, because both morphology and derivation study the word structure, but the difference is in the way that structure is treated. Morphologically, the morphemic structure of words is studied together with its segmentation into the smallest meaningful units, while word formation studies the structure of words from the aspect of their relationship with the formed words, their meanings, and the ways of expressing them. Therefore, word formation surpasses the morphology domain and encompasses the affixless ways of word formation, as elaborated in Vaneva (2019, pp. 5–6).

In analytical languages, like English, zero derivation is a derivational process in which by adding a zero (null) derivational affix to a lexeme from one lexical category or subcategory, a new lexeme is being formed, which belongs to a different category or subcategory and therefore has a different distribution and position in the sentence, thus, performs another function; has a similar meaning to the first lexeme, and absolutely the same (derivational) form like the first lexeme, while inflectional modifications and interventions are allowed in favour of the process (Note 1).

As zero derivation is a productive process present in all walks of life, when the fast, everyday life requires people to react promptly to the different demands from the environment and to express themselves as economically as possible, in both written and spoken form, the electronic means of communication increase the productivity of this process. People look for shorter ways to say something, but without any harm in meaning; that is, they tend to be short, clear, yet, understood.

Undoubtedly, the cognitive method allows for this to happen: maintaining the form of the lexeme, not complicating it with derivational affixes and not burdening the participants in the conversation, by transferring the meaning from that lexeme and by adding the necessary inflectional suffixes that the new word group requires, a new lexeme is formed, when the result of the process between the two lexemes is: (inflectionally,) same form; similar, expanded meaning—due to cognition and semantic transfer; but completely different lexical (sub)category.

Many studies and papers have been written on zero derivation in linguistics, but as this process is present in electronic media too, and we have noted its existence in texts that deal with business topics, this paper aims to show how present and productive this process is in online business texts. We will use online business articles as a corpus, and, by using cognition, will analyse the meaning of the zero derived lexemes. Out of the many directions in which the process moves and of its several types, in this paper, we will focus on the most productive changes—from a *noun* to a *verb*, and from a *verb* to a *noun*.

## 2. Literature Review

Depending on which word group the word is derived into during the process of lexicalization, the following types of changes can be distinguished:

- substantivisation (a word that is not a noun enters the group of nouns);
- adjectivisation (certain words enter the group of adjectives);
- verbalisation (words enter the group of verbs); and
- adverbialisation (forming adverbs from other word groups), which means adverbialisation of nominal, adjectival, verbal, and other structures.

Our paper focuses on two of these changes: substantivisation and verbalisation.

In English, zero derivation became an important topic when Sweet (1891) coined the term **conversion**. Since then it has been studied in many grammar books on word-formation. Some of the authors who have worked on this are Clark and Clark (1979), Pennanen (1971), as well as Liber (1981), but this topic has become particularly important in the 1960s due to the studies of Marchand (1964), Kastovsky (1968), and more than a four-decade pause, the topic is interesting again, with the research of Don (1993), Cetnarowska (1993), Štekauer (1996) and Twardzisz (1997), until the more recent studies come at the end of the last and the beginning of the new century.

As a distinguished German linguist who worked on zero derivation, Marchand (1969, p. 359) says:

“By derivation by a zero-morpheme, I understand the use of a word as a determinant in a syntagma whose

determinatum is not expressed in phonic form but understood to be present in the content, thanks to an association with other syntagmas where the element of content has its counterpart on the plane of phonic expression.”

Regarding our process, Jackson (1980, pp. 109–110) says that it is derivational, analogous to suffixation. For example, the verb **release** which corresponds with the noun **release** can be used as an example of zero derivation:

*They **released** him. ~ They ordered his **release**.*

But this is not always a case, which is why these two processes (zero derivation and suffixation) are different. Namely, it is the suffixal derivation, not zero derivation that connects the verb *acquit* and the noun *acquittal*:

*They acquitted him. and*

*They ordered his **acquittal**.*

Hurford and Heasley (1983, p. 206) state that when we analyse the word-formation and derivation processes, we ought to bear in mind that it is not one, but three processes that take place:

- 1) morphological—changing the word form by adding affixes (prefixes or suffixes);
- 2) syntactic—changing the type/class of the word; for instance, from a noun to a verb; and
- 3) semantic—creating a new meaning.

This means that word-formation is connected with all three processes, and what is especially significant is the connection of this process with morphology and lexicology.

Arnold (1986, pp. 153–154) thinks that the development of this phenomenon is due to the absence of morphological elements and formal signs that mark the lexical category to which the word belongs. This is what many scientists think—that creating a new word is subject to contextual use, and no isolated word, outside of context, can be formed through zero derivation.

Asher (1994, p. 758) maintains that in studying zero derivation it is very important to be able to say which of the words in the pair connected with zero derivation is the starting and which is the resulting lexeme.

What Katamba (1994, p. 70) says about the process of changing the word group or subgroup is the following:

“In English, very often lexical items are created not by affixation but by **conversion** or **zero derivation**, i.e. without any alteration being made to the shape of the input base. The word-form remains the same, but it realises a different lexical item”.

According to him, both the morphological structure and the syntactic position of the word equally help in determining the word’s lexical category.

In explaining the zero morph, Štekauer (1996) says zero functions as a derivational suffix in the process of word-formation, but the same element cannot be used for all semantically different functions. This implies that the process of zero derivation is a unique, specific process based on principles different from those that characterise the derivational process.

Coates (1999, p. 30) says: “Some lexemes may belong to different lexical categories without having that relationship marked in any way in their structure”.

Plag’s opinion (Plag, 1999) is that zero derivation from a verb to a noun is in complementary distribution with nominalisation by an obvious suffix.

This same author, Plag (2003, p. 12), maintains that in the process of zero derivation words are derived without any obvious marking, which does exist but is invisible, and it would be wrong to name it as a zero morph since what is zero is the outer expression, not the meaning.

This is illustrated with the following examples, where absolutely the same form (from derivational aspect) is used as both a noun and a verb, while the necessary inflectional modifications happen as required by the corresponding word group:

*She **used** the money well. ~ Her **use** of the money was good.*

*She **used** up the money last. ~ Her **using** up of the money was last.*

*He **rearranged** the furniture with difficulty. ~ His **rearrangement** of the furniture was difficult.*

*They **dismissed** his objections in a hostile manner. ~ Their **dismissal** of his objections was hostile (Note 2).*

In their book titled *Approaches to Conversion/Zero Derivation*, Bauer and Valera (2005, p. 138) say the fact that one of the two words—the derived one—has a semantically more complex structure than the other—the basic one—is a reason for Hansen's argument that the interpretation of zero derivation as a simple transposition into another word category, that is, as a syntactic phenomenon is inappropriate: the meaning change that accompanies zero derivation usually influences the semantic and syntactic occurrence of the resulting word, and this is considered an indirect proof for the production of a new, derived word that is outside the syntactic domain.

In the introduction of this source, these same authors, Bauer and Valera (2005), define zero derivation explaining what a category change means if every category change without affixation is zero derivation, and how to determine the direction of the process.

Following this idea, we can conclude that the link between nouns and verbs with the same form, like *a bridge* and *to bridge* is due to inflection and the lack of that formal mark in such word pairs is explained with zero derivation itself. Therefore, the definition of zero derivation remains valid: it is a change of the word class without adding derivational affixes, while it is allowed to add or omit inflectional affixes.

Talking about the inflection-derivation dichotomy, we will mention the following interpretations:

Inflection is part of grammar when affixes are added to form new word forms that are grammatical words, but they are not new lexemes, while derivation and compounding are part of word-formation. The inflectional morphemes mark the grammatical categories like number (plural)—*workers*, person (third-person singular present simple tense)—*writes*, tense (past simple)—*worked*; present participle—*writing*; past participle - *written*; Genitive—*John's*, as well as a comparative and superlative form of the adjective—*faster*, *the fastest*. In analytical languages, like English, there is a small number of inflectional suffixes, which makes it less likely for any changes to be made to the lexeme in terms of its form. That is the reason for analyzing zero derivation at a word level when only clear, genuine cases are considered. This is illustrated with the following change: **holiday** (noun—natural class) +  $\emptyset$  → **holiday** (verb—zero derived lexeme) when the form of the lexemes does not change since there are no inflectional modifications, while the meaning is expanded, and, of course, the word group is changed.

Carter (1998, p. 10) states that the general distinction between the categories inflection and derivation is that the first of the root(s) of a given lexeme produces all word forms that are syntactically defined, while derivation results in forming different lexemes. Thus, a characteristic of the inflectional affixes is that they show grammatical variations of a given root. They don't form new lexemes nor do they change the lexical category of a given lexeme, while derivation signals lexical variations of the root, and they usually change word groups so when there are no formal changes of the root, the derivation is in question. Simply said, inflectional morphology deals with the grammatical change of the word form, while derivational deals with lexico-semantic changes.

According to Ridanović (1985, p. 183), cases, different verb forms caused by the change of tense, person, number, and modality belong to inflection.

There will be lexemes identical in forms, such as the present participle/gerund and the verbal noun, or the past participle of the verb and the verbal adjective. What should be considered in these cases is the fact that there are two types of *-ing* suffixes: one is derivational, and the other is inflectional, as is the case with the *-ed* suffix: derivational and inflectional, thus creating different forms—products of different processes. This makes the distinction between derivation and inflection very important when discussing zero derivation, which only emphasises the significance of determining the word's natural class, that is, in order to talk about zero derivation and understand this process, we need to determine the natural class of the word, so that we know which is basic and which is a derived element in the pair.

According to Saaed (1997, p. 299), linguistic knowledge is part of general cognition, and cognitive linguists differentiate between the formal and functional approaches to the language. They also agree with Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that metaphor is a basic element in our categorisation of the world and the thought processes so that in cognitive linguistics the metaphor is a basic figure for semantic expansion of the word, which maps the meaning of a lexeme from one domain to another, thus connecting the superficially unconnectable meanings that the speaker regards as close and connectable.

In her doctoral dissertation, Lazarevska-Stanchevska (2004, p. 12) explains the cognitive approach to language saying that as a separate part of linguistics, cognitive linguistics has its approach to the language and the language development is based on the human's power to perceive and understand, while people understand by finding similarities of the new elements with the corresponding prototype of the given category. This approach creates a new perspective on our understanding of the internal structure of the word's meaning. It shows that the

structure is not autonomous and unique but it depends on our perception of the world, while the meaning of the word is analysed on the basis of its similarity with the prototype—the natural class of the lexeme.

As far as the prototype is concerned, it is the most prominent member of a category, and Rosch (1977), researching in psychology, classifies the new terms based on similarity with such element. Namely, the more the notion resembles the prototype, the more likely it is to be placed in a certain category. Therefore, the prototype's role is immensely important in the cognitive study of the meaning of lexical elements since all variants of meaning of an element are connected with the prototype through closer or farther links by using metaphor, while the speakers understand abstract concepts by using physical experience. Hence, the principles of cognitive semantics are: determining the prototype of one category, finding similarities and links between the prototype and the other meanings of the lexical element, and the metaphor as a means of semantic expansion.

In conventional dictionaries of the English language, the entry word is the cited form of the lexeme (as it is in the dictionary) and a root form to which different suffixes can be added to create other forms of the same lexeme. For example, the entry word **love** is both a conventionally cited form and a root form of the verb **love**.

Many roots can serve as a basis for both transitive and intransitive verbs (**move, open**) and belong to both countable and uncountable nouns (**fish, paper, sound**). Many morphologically simple forms in English can be a root of nouns and verbs (**bank, man, jump, move, doubt, answer, skin, knife**) or adjectives and verbs (**dirty, clean, dry, warm, empty, open, shut**). According to Lyons (1977, pp. 513–523), these cases belong to the morphological process of zero derivation, like the verbs **release** and **attempt** that are derived from their corresponding verbs according to the formula:  $V + \emptyset \rightarrow N$ , where  $\emptyset$  stands for the zero element with whose affixation the process is conducted. As opposed to the previous zero derived lexemes, *extension, justification, and arrangement* show nouns formed out of verbs through the process of suffixal derivation.

What helps in determining the direction of the process is Marchand's criterion, who distinguishes the following aspects:

- 1) semantic dependence (the word is derived if another lexeme is used to explain its meaning);
- 2) usage scope (the element with a smaller usage is zero derived);
- 3) semantic scope (the element with fewer semantic fields is zero derived); and
- 4) phonetic form (some suffixes express the word group to which the word belongs and, if it fits into it, that lexeme is zero derived).

According to him, the semantic links are crucial in determining the direction of the zero derivational process when the more basic element in the pair is the one whose semantic priority is implied by the other lexeme, which gives the basis of the semantic definition for the other element. This Marchand's opinion makes us say that the verb **head** is derived from the noun **head** because the noun zero derived to the verb **head** means to act as a head of something.

*John has **papered** the bedroom.* (verb)

*I'm publishing a **paper** on part of my research.* (noun)

*Frank **paints** other people's windows but ignores his own.* (verb)

*Frank decorates other people's windows with **paint**.* (noun)

The examples show that the words **paint** and **paper** are both a noun and a verb, so this is undoubtedly zero derivation since both nouns are concrete, and as verbs, their meaning would be to apply something, which is a reason for the native speaker to think that the verb is zero derived from the noun since the noun is used in explaining the verb.

Having taken into consideration the stands of all authors when defining zero derivation, it ought to be concluded that our process is lexico-grammatical, that is, syntactic, connected with both derivation and inflection. The lexical part of the process is pictured in the lexical changes of the word and the creation of a new lexeme, while the grammatical or syntactic aspect is seen in a different function that the element obtains depending on its position in the sentence. This is nonetheless zero derivation since a new lexeme is created or derived, and it is zero as an invisible or zero suffix is used or added. The inflectional part of the process is present in most cases when inflectional affixes are added, and from a source lexeme, the new element - the target lexeme, is formed.

### 3. Method

This study illustrates the productivity of two directions of the process of zero derivation: from nouns to verbs, and from verbs to nouns, and analyses these zero derived lexemes as used in a series of online business articles

selected by the authors. These two directions have been chosen since they are the most prominent and productive types of zero derivation in English, while the online media and business texts have served as our corpus because this fast and economic way of expressing oneself—like in zero derivation—is evident in business context.

The corpus has been excerpted from a series of business texts, all analyzing the way communication happens and leadership is practised in different companies. The phrases or sentences that contain zero derived words provide the context for our analysis, from where the lexemes with uniting features are classified within the noun to verb or the verb to noun groups.

For that purpose, a total number of forty nine online business articles have been selected, read and analysed; thirty of which have been taken only from the renowned management magazine: *Harvard Business Review*, while the others come from business magazines: *Entrepreneur*, *Chief Executive*; a business consulting company: *Branding Strategy Insider*; a web site: *HR Daily Advisor*; online publications: *HR Zone* and *Reliable Plant*; news media: *Time*, *Forbes*, *BBC*; a blog: *For Entrepreneurs*; a leadership portal: *Leaderonomics.com*, and the business magazine: *Inc*. In the end, twenty-five sources provided us with examples relevant enough for this process to be analysed, and all these are listed separately at the end, after the Reference section.

Having selected the examples that we wanted to analyse, that is the lexemes whose zero derivation was in question, we had to accurately determine the natural class of the words, so that we properly group them either in the nouning or in the verbing process. To do this—to determine whether the lexeme was first a noun and then zero derived to a verb, or it was first a verb which later zero derived to a noun, we used several dictionary sources, all listed after the Reference section, but we mainly relied on the etymological information found in *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) and the *Online Etymology Dictionary*. These dictionaries follow the diachronic criterion, give the etymological development, and report the words' earliest attestation—criteria essential to determine the direction of zero derivation.

For this study we chose a corpus of online business articles from which all cases of zero derivation from nouns to verbs and from verbs to nouns have been analysed, meaning that we did not choose cases of nouning and verbing in zero derivation that are only business-related, but instead of that we studied the productivity and meaning of all cases of nouning and verbing in zero derivation that were found in our corpus, seeing that in online business articles, both business and general lexemes undergo the process of zero derivation.

As communication is important in all spheres of life, in business it is paramount to be able to communicate effectively, for which the skills of writing, listening and speaking should be learnt and practised. Managers need to be able to structure and write effective and complex correspondence and documents, from emails and memos to proposals and reports, but also to write and speak in the level of language expected of leaders (Note 3).

Moreover, in daily business life, organisational members with leadership responsibility need to provide their employees with work-relevant information, give them feedback about how they have done their jobs, and show them consideration to establish a good work relationship with their subordinates, which explains Barnard's (1938, p. 226) quote: "the first function of an executive is to develop and maintain a system of communication". This opinion proves that communication plays a central role for leadership and is aligned with empirical findings that show high frequencies of communicative leader behaviors in daily work life (Note 4).

Taking into consideration this need—for the art of communication to be mastered when doing business and talking about it—to convey the message and be properly understood, leaders or, business people in general, ought to use a carefully crafted language that is in line with their working style demands: short, effective, meaningful and always to the point. That is why in this paper we look into business language as a ground for our research on zero derivation.

As far as the paper's methodology is concerned, we apply the cognitive method, meaning that from a word that belongs to a certain lexical category, we expand the meaning to a new lexeme and derive a new word that has the same form, similar meaning, but undoubtedly belongs to a different lexical category. Thus, the source and the target lexeme are identical or (inflectionally) similar in form, unexceptionally similar in meaning, and inevitably different in their word class.

This semantic transfer is possible due to the existence of metaphor, as one of the most accepted and the most widely spread processes of meaning change in lexemes (Note 5).

The word metaphor itself is derived from Greek, meaning *transfer*, so what is transferred is exactly the meaning from one word or expression to another.

It is a device used to explain something new, unknown, and abstract with the old, known, and already understood concepts, that is, it acts between different domains: by using metaphor, we understand two completely different

things to be the same although there is no objective similarity between them. When the speaker zero derives, and certainly that is done by using a metaphor, they believe the hearer will be able to understand the semantic transfer from the old to the new lexeme, to map the meaning from the existent to the up-to-that-moment non-existent form for him, and to mentally process and perceive the new lexeme with a somewhat similar meaning to the first one, but with a different role, function, and position in the sentence.

This semantic similarity aids the smoothness of the process—makes it possible to move from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’, from the concrete, known to the abstract, new and unknown domains. As metaphor is everywhere, part of our life, it is quite expected to say that every language is metaphorical, and there will always be better-known concepts that will be used in understanding the lesser-known notions. The basis is understandable, while the concepts are less clear, but by being connected through metaphor, they acquire clearer, more tangible interpretations.

Regarding the use of metaphor and its place in the understanding of language, it has to be emphasised that each metaphor depends on our knowledge, which explains why cognitive linguists state that we intuitively and unconsciously use metaphor to understand the mind, emotions, and all other abstract concepts with the help of the already known and learned. Thus, metaphor enables us to perceive or understand everything that is abstract and difficult to understand.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

As the zero derived lexemes in our corpus will be analysed in the two, most productive directions of the process, this part will discuss and analyse the process of *verbing*—from a noun to a verb, and *nouning*—from a verb to a noun.

##### 4.1 Verbing—Zero Derivation from a Noun to a Verb

The first subgroup will analyse nouns that have been zero derived to verbs. The natural class of nouns has been confirmed with the dictionary sources listed in the Reference subsection, while the interpretation of the process and the analysis of the newly formed lexeme is performed semantically, meaning that cognition explains the semantic transfer so important for the process to take place and elaborates on the meaning similarity embedded in the second lexeme on the basis of the first. The meaning that the zero derived verbs have is underlined in each group:

###### 4.1.1 To Do the Action as if the Instrument/Tool or the Object Named by the Noun Is Used to Perform It

- [1] ... if Mollie sends Liz an angry email filled with typos, Liz will imagine Mollie **hammering** out that email in a blind rage and perceive the message as really angry. (Fosslien & West Duffy, 2020)
- [2] The reality is that without buy-in, employees won't bother to **brush** up their language. (Neeley, 2012)
- [3] **Shielding** employees from bad news is akin to treating them like children. (Baldoni, 2009)
- [4] But after **nailing** her purpose statement, ... she decided to run for a hotly contested school committee seat, and won. (Craig & Snook, 2014)
- [5] Then, as a manager from a direct culture, you'd need to again **filter** that through your understanding of indirectness ... (Molinsky, 2015)
- [6] If we had to think consciously about everything from keeping our heart **pumping** to breathing to avoiding large predatory mammals, we'd be dead in no time. (Morgan, 2010)

The bold words in these examples denote actions that look like performed with the object named with the noun. Certainly, this is a metaphorical meaning of the verb, that is, the noun is not used in performing the action, but as metaphor is in the centre of the process, the metaphorical meaning of the noun is transferred to the verb, which motivates the authors of these sentences to be creative and makes them form verbs based on the established nouns.

Thus, from the noun **hammer**, which is a heavy metal tool used for hitting things, or metaphorically—for doing something firmly, going from the literal to the figurative meaning, the metaphorical expansion in the phrase ‘to **hammer** an email’ means to write it as if hitting it with a hammer—strongly, resolutely and angrily, something that is evidenced with the emotion in the context in continuation—‘in a blind rage’.

Thus, ‘to **brush** up a language’ means to make it clean (like when using a brush)—in this case with the language—correct, polished; ‘to **shield** employees’ is to protect them (as if using a shield); and from **nail**—a small, thin piece of metal that is hit into something with a hammer, to position it, the semantic transfer in the phrase ‘to **nail** a statement’ leads to the interpretation: to successfully make it—do something successfully.

Namely, regardless of the context in which the zero derived verb is used, when you ‘**nail something**’, there are two important moments: 1. *the action is finished, completed*; and 2. *it is done successfully*.

When ‘you **filter something**’, it is *like using a filter—to clean or process something/make something cleaner, better—in the context of [5], it means to make something go through your understanding, to mentally process it, and ‘when the heart pumps’, it works, and works as if using a pump—as a pump brings water from the depth of a well to the ground surface, the heart brings blood to the body/it works.*

[7] *Groups should set norms prescribing how members will interact, and managers should **monitor** behavior accordingly.* (Neeley, 2012)

[8] *Two people will **mirror** each other’s movements ... at exactly the same time.* (McCaskey, 1979)

This very same metaphoric transfer is present in the last two examples, when ‘to **monitor**’ means *to watch, observe, control as when using a monitor*, and ‘to **mirror**’ is *to reflect, copy, as when using a mirror*.

#### 4.1.2 To Do the Action as if the Person in the Profession Named by the Noun Performs It

[9] *Through my research and work over the past decade with companies, I’ve developed an adoption framework to **guide** companies in their language efforts.* (Neeley, 2012)

[10] *When it comes to taking action, the leader needs to **judge** exactly how much they can rely on individual co-operation through persuasion ...* (Robson, 2020).

[11] *Managers identified talent that the company wanted to retain and **tailored** special programs for them.* (Neeley, 2012)

[12] *He once, for example, **engineered** the move of a manager from New Zealand to Gillette’s operations in Redwood City, California ...* (Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996)

[13] *He never actively **mentored** or **coached** local lieutenants ...* (Neeley & Kaplan, 2014)

[14] *Consider the case of Karla, who **chaired** the board of a successful nonprofit.* (Grenny, 2019)

In these examples, the semantic transfer from the noun to the verb is pretty straightforward, so one does the action as if the person in that profession would do it; namely, from a **guide**—*one gives directions to the companies*; from a **judge**—*one makes a decision*; from a **tailor**—*one makes, creates, and adjusts programs*; ‘to **engineer**’ means *to arrange, design or control the move as an engineer whose job is to design or control machines*, from a **mentor**—*to act as a mentor or coach to the local lieutenants*, and ‘to **chair**’—*to act as a chair of the meeting—one who sits on the president’s chair and holds the meeting*.

#### 4.1.3 To Do the Action by Adding or Applying the Noun to the Object

[15] *When a manager assigns a pejorative word ..., he is **labeling** that person.* (McCaskey, 1979)

[16] *Like physical settings, body language and paralinguistics convey important messages that **color**, support, or contradict the words people use.* (McCaskey, 1979)

[17] *It is their job to **grade** and analyze this information.* (Maasik, 2019)

If one ‘**labels a person**’, it means that *one metaphorically attaches a certain label to that person—characterizes it as somebody or something*; ‘to **color something**’, means *to add colour to the object*, and ‘to **grade**’ is *to give a grade to something*.

#### 4.1.4 To Do the Action as Coming/Originating from the Noun

[18] *The first three purposes are primarily strategic and **rooted** in self-interest.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[19] *But for older generations who have been longer established in the world of work, I think the most tangible source of communication anxiety **stems** from a fear or dislike of being judged.* (Cooper, 2018)

**Root** and **stem** are near-synonyms that only grammatically differ—**root** being the basic form of the word, while the **stem** is a combination of the basic form and the inflectional affixes. However, putting aside the grammatical explanation, in this process, these lexemes allude to the origin of the object: **rooted** is used as a verbal adjective, that is, it is an adjective that comes from the verb **root**, which is zero derived from the noun, so if ‘*the purposes are **rooted** in self-interest*’, it means *they come from self-interest, their roots are in self-interest*, while if ‘*communication anxiety **stems** from a fear or dislike*’, *the origin of communication anxiety is fear or dislike, it comes from there*.

#### 4.1.5 To Do the Action like Being Placed in the Noun

[20] *En masse (he doesn’t see them as individuals) “they” are “birds”, which suggests he thinks they are pretty,*



*caged, and—quite likely—fragile.* (McCaskey, 1979)

[21] *American managers especially allow each other greater leeway in delivering a hard truth if it is **packaged** as part of a joke.* (McCaskey, 1979)

In these examples, our zero derived verbs are used as adjectives and they talk about the subjects placed/closed in the object named by the noun, so *the birds are placed in a cage*, meaning that ‘if you **cage** something’, *you place it in a cage*, or metaphorically—*confine it*, and ‘if you **package** something’, *you put/close it in a package*; that is, metaphorically, *the truth is altered, adjusted, shaped, presented in a certain way (like a joke)*.

#### 4.1.6 To Do the Action by Putting the Object Somewhere

[22] *And the direct reports take real ownership of the challenges that they’ve **placed** on the agenda by their own free choice.* (Brendel, 2015)

[23] *By learning how to teach online, we learnt how to **market** ourselves to the whole world.* (Bojadziev, 2020)

As the noun **place** denotes a general location itself, the verb zero derived from it more specifically means *to put the challenges on the agenda*.

However, in [23] there is a more substantial metaphoric transfer—from the specific name of the place, ‘to **market** ourselves’ we come to the meaning *to put ourselves on that place—on the market, to advertise ourselves, to offer goods for sale*.

#### 4.1.7 To Do the Action by Creating the Effect of the Noun

[24] *As she explains, “We need to be extra cautious, because the Americans’ mastery of the language may lead them to take advantage of us and try to **fool** us.”* (Kaplan, 2014)

[25] **Challenge** your teams to bring you “yes, and... this is what we can do instead” solutions instead of excuses. (Graziano, 2020)

[26] *That’s because, far from **clouding** our ability to decide, emotions make it possible.* (Morgan, 2010)

[27] *Michael Dell of Dell Computer in another CEO who **plots** his company’s short- and long-term strategic path by gathering vast amounts of data.* (Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996)

[28] *In a second area, chairs are **grouped** around a coffee table or are placed at right angles to each other.* (McCaskey, 1979)

[29] *But I have a sound managerial experience **paired** with extensive leadership experience in this crisis, so I might share with you my experiences and views on this matter.* (Bojadziev, 2020)

[30] *He sees himself as an entrepreneur and feels that, while most of them are attractively dressed and **schooled**, the other executives in the bank don’t have any fire in their guts.* (McCaskey, 1979)

[31] *Self-awareness is critical; understanding your own emotional tendencies and responses is essential if you’re going to evoke and **shape** emotional responses in others.* (Morgan, 2010)

[32] **Frame** your wording to achieve this goal; instead of scolding or reprimanding, use a friendlier tone with a corrective direction. (Alton, 2016)

If ‘someone **fools** you’, *they try to make you a fool, be fooled*; the same with a **challenge**—*you will have this effect, and become challenged*; when ‘something is **clouded**’, *it is hidden, not clear or transparent*; when ‘**grouping** something’, *a group is made—it is grouped*, when ‘**pairing**’, *a pair is formed, the object is paired, goes with something else*; ‘to **school**’ is *to get the effect of teaching/schooling—be taught, educated*; and ‘to **shape** something’, is *to give a certain shape to the object*, that is, *the object is shaped*. If you ‘**frame** the wording’, it is like metaphorically *putting your wording in a frame, choosing it more carefully, adjusting it to serve your aim, so in the end, the effect is that the wording is framed*.

#### 4.1.8 To Use the Noun When Doing the Action

[33] *Additionally, leaders should **model** the behaviors and attitudes they want others to demonstrate.* (Davis, 2020)

[34] *At Rakuten, Mikitani **signaled** the importance of the English-language policy to his entire organization relentlessly.* (Neeley, 2012)

[35] *Try saving the email to your draft folder or **schedule** it to send later.* (Fosslien & West Duffy, 2020)

This group displays a very clear semantic mapping: ‘to **model**’ means *to serve as a model, be a model to the others*, ‘to **signal**’ is *to give a signal*, and ‘to **schedule**’ is *to make a schedule/plan for something to happen*.

#### 4.1.9 To Do the Action by Actually Using (the Object Contained in) the Noun

[36] ... *she may feel anxious, and think that her email was so egregious that she'll never be allowed to **email** an editor again.* (Fosslien & West Duffy, 2020)

[37] "... *If your email is not urgent, I'll probably still reply. I have a problem,*" **tweeted** the parody account *Academics Say.* (Fosslien & West Duffy, 2020)

[38] *When the COVID-19 crisis started, I **googled** the phrase 'organisational culture in times of crisis' and 'leadership in times of crisis'.* (Bojadziev, 2020)

In these examples, the action is: '**to email**' —*to write or send an email*, '**to tweet**' —*to write or send a tweet*, with the equally understandable metaphoric transfer in [38] —*as a noun, Google is an internet search engine*, so '**to google**' means *to search for something on the internet using this search engine*.

#### 4.1.10 To Do the Action as if the Substance from the Noun Is Added to the Object

[39] ... *the firm's attempts to disengage by apologizing or suggesting a channel change were not only ineffective but tended to **fuel** the flames.* (HKCS, 2020)

[40] *Additionally, you'll inevitably realize the stakes are high when it comes to communicating—if you fail to do this properly, you can **poison** the atmosphere between you and a colleague, as well as your company's morale.* (Froschheiser, 2020)

'**To fuel**' is *to add fuel to the flames, to make the flame stronger and bigger/intensify it*, so the metaphor here brings us to the meaning—*to make the situation worse*, as '**to poison the atmosphere**' means *to worsen it, as when adding poison to something has a worsening or deadly effect on something*.

#### 4.2 Nouning—Zero Derivation from a Verb to a Noun

The zero derived nouns have the meaning of the following groups:

##### 4.2.1 Concrete Result of the Verb

[41] *Most of the posts in the study (70%) garnered at least one organizational **reply**.* (HKCS, 2020)

[42] *Only in response to the growing public outcry—and, more importantly, to the **bans** placed on Coke products by the governments of France, Belgium ...* (Kellerman, 2006)

[43] *This is especially true when it comes to delivering straight **talk**.* (Baldoni, 2009)

[44] *And they're safe **bets**: These phrases have been around a long time because they send a clear, solicitous message.* (Steinmetz, 2020)

[45] *Grammarly has a fantastic article worth the **read** if you're interested in digging into how to become a more concise communicator.* (Alton, 2016)

[46] *Apologies are a tactic leader now frequently use in an **attempt** to put behind them, at minimal cost, the errors of their ways.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[47] *On a state **visit** to Poland in 1970, German chancellor Willy Brandt extended a wordless apology for crimes committed three decades earlier ...* (Kellerman, 2006)

[48] *Not surprisingly, we also encountered CEOs whose personalities seemed to be a natural **fit** with their leadership approaches.* (Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996)

[49] *They constitute a record for which he cannot and will not escape **blame**.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[50] *There is a **call** for workers to "get back to work" to "get the economy going again."* (Hedden, 2020)

[51] *Expert opinion is mixed regarding the **use** of compensation as a service-recovery tool ...* (HKCS, 2020)

[52] *The people pondering similarities did report feeling more connected but there was no **change** in their mood.* (Steinmetz, 2020)

[53] *I do think we will see a generational **shift** on the issue of communication anxiety some day.* (Cooper, 2018)

[54] *With sentiment analysis, we can use AI to understand certain things about a given statement, such as whether a brand **mention** or film review is positive, negative, or neutral.* (Socher, 2018)

[55] *While the car is away, they will mark their **claims** with chairs or trash cans ...* (McCaskey, 1979)

[56] *But employees will also have an opportunity to stay in the **know** -- and that will help many of them.* (Maasik, 2019)

[57] *The study shows that companies that communicate effectively had a 47% higher **return** to shareholders over a five-year period (mid-2004 to mid-2009).* (Baltoni, 2009)

[58] *Their teams admire them and follow their **lead**.* (Froschheiser, 2020)

Since this group is rather long, but with the same semantic pattern, which is why these examples have been grouped together, to avoid repetition, the meaning of the nouns will be explained with only several examples and the pattern of that explanation will be valid for the whole group: *the result of replying is a **reply**, of banning—a **ban** is produced, when one talks, a **talk** is delivered, and this same transfer happens in the other examples previously listed.*

#### 4.2.2 Result of Verbs That Denote Body Movements/Activities

[59] *And if you're a leader trying to be positive, it comes off even worse because you'll appear out of **touch** ...* (Bregman, 2012)

[60] *To assess the relationship between a post's author and the rest of the online community, they counted their communications; the higher the number, the stronger the **tie** ...* (HKCS, 2020)

[61] *Take a **look** at some of the most successful communicators around you (and those in a bigger spotlight), and you'll see the following traits ...* (Alton, 2016)

[62] *In 1998, he apologized for the genocide in Rwanda, which had taken place four years earlier, on his **watch**.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[63] *The bottom line takes a **hit** when employees stop participating in group settings.* (Neeley, 2012)

[64] *The longer the **stretch**, the greater the potential for declines.* (Graziano, 2020)

The actions of *touching, tying, looking, watching, hitting, and stretching* are only some of the examples in our corpus from which their corresponding nouns are zero derived: **touch, tie, look, watch, hit** and **stretch**. The nouns are simply zero derived from the same-named verbs and, as far as the literal meaning of the derivatives is concerned, no abstract dimension is in question here. But, except in the examples with *a look* and *a watch*, all other cases illustrate metaphorical use of the nouns, and the meaning of the noun is beyond its actual semantics, so: 'if a leader is out of **touch**', it means that *they are not informed (like they are not close and cannot touch the situation), they don't have the same ideas like most people about something*; a **tie** is a *good relation, friendly feelings*; 'when something takes a **hit**', *it reaches the place*—in this case, the bottom line—*after being thrown, dropped, or shot*; and from 'to **stretch**'—*to straighten the arms and legs, metaphorically, to reach out as far as possible*, the zero derivative means *a period of time*, while in this case, it implies *an unusual and difficult situation*.

#### 4.2.3 Result of Upward or Downward Actions

[65] *The situation in Iraq remained unstable at best, and the president's approval ratings, ... suffered a steep **decline**.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[66] *United's stock plunged, with many observers attributing the **drop** in part to the PR debacle.* (HKCS, 2020)

[67] *The CEO of health care IT company Cerner insulted his management team in an e-mail; when the company's stock took a **dive**, he apologized for the e-mail he'd sent.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[68] *In his book *On Apology*, Aaron Lazare offers ample evidence that the number of apologies is on the **rise** ...* (Kellerman, 2006)

These nouns are made of verbs that show a certain vertical action, so *the product of the action of declining* is a **decline**, *the result of dropping something* is a **drop**, **dive** is *the act of diving*, and *the process of rising* is named a **rise**.

#### 4.2.4 The Noun Is a Mark Left as a Result of the Action

[69] *Consider the case of Exxon (now Exxon Mobil), which was notoriously laggard in apologizing for the effects of the Exxon Valdez's disastrous oil **spill** along the coast of Alaska in 1989.* (Kellerman, 2006)

[70] *Its refusal to acknowledge its role in an environmental disaster left a **stain** on its reputation that persists to this day.* (Kellerman, 2006)

These nouns are created when the actions leave a mark on the object/surface, so *the place where oil spills* (the verb) is called *an oil spill*, in the first example; as should be in the second example, *when something touches a certain surface, it stains it*, but the context in which this noun is used is metaphorical—*when something leaves a stain on something, it compromises its purity, decreases its reputation*, since 'a **stain** on something', means that

*something is not clean anymore, not as it used to be, it is dirty now (literally or figuratively).*

#### 4.2.5 The Noun Is People Referred to by the Source Lexeme

[71] *While the latter approach may initially take more time, companies often find that entry level hires ultimately become their best leaders ...* (Neeley & Kaplan, 2014)

[72] *Defaulting to lateral hires can make it more difficult to build a cohesive culture—those recruits have been trained elsewhere and may have trouble assimilating.* (Neeley & Kaplan, 2014)

These nouns name the people that are objects of the action: *of hiring—hires, of recruiting—recruits*. The same scheme applies here like in the other subgroups, the only difference being that the zero derived nouns name people.

### 5. Conclusions

The paper analysed two types of zero derivation in English: a noun to verb, and a verb to noun, as they are used in online business articles. These directions were chosen as the most productive types of the process, while online media were chosen as the fastest, time-pressed, and most widely spread channel where information of any kind is released to the public. Since the existence of this word-formation process—zero derivation—in the language in general, had been studied by quite a number of researchers, the challenge was to see if it exists in business texts, how productive it is, how it is used, and if there is a simple semantic mapping when zero deriving the target lexeme or there is an evident metaphoric transfer between the two lexemes. In determining the latter objective—if there is a simple mapping or a metaphor-motivated notion is in question, we analyse the meaning association that the speaker makes between the source and the target lexeme, while in doing this, the meaning is motivated by metaphor. The essence of the process is the cognitive transfer of the meaning, grounded in metaphor, between the starting and the resulting lexeme, when from a word that is well-known, the speaker forms another one with the same form, but expanded meaning, assuming that the hearer will ‘see’ the semantic transfer and understand the meaning similarity between the two elements. Another crucial moment in determining the direction of the process is knowing the word’s natural class since we cannot talk about the resulting lexeme if we are not sure which the starting element is.

Thus, the findings of this research paper show that this process is very common and productive in online business articles and that this economic type of word formation definitely happens with the same level of metaphoric transfer as expected. However, it ought to be emphasised that there is a bigger leap in meaning when zero deriving from a noun to a verb compared to the same process from a verb to a noun. The implication of this is that more metaphoric engagement is needed on the part of the hearer in deciphering the meaning that the speaker sees and instills in the new verb zero derived from a noun than vice versa. According to the classification in our discussion section, the reason for this is that the nouns zero derived from verbs are results of that action: 1) concrete result of the verb, 2) result of verbs that denote body movements/activities, 3) result of upward or downward actions, 4) a mark left as a result of the action, and 5) people referred to by the source lexeme. On the other hand, the verbs zero derived from nouns have several functional implications. Those that we found in our excerpted corpus are the following: 1) to do the action as if the instrument/tool or the object named by the noun is used to perform it, 2) as if the person in the profession named by the noun performs it, 3) by adding or applying the noun to the object, 4) as coming/originating from the noun, 5) like being placed in the noun, 6) by putting the object somewhere, 7) by creating the effect of the noun, 8) to use the noun when doing the action, 9) by actually using (the object contained in) the noun, and 10) as if the substance from the noun is added to the object.

In any case, regardless of the direction, the paper shows that not only is zero derivation used in online business articles, but as a productive and economical process it is undoubtedly embraced in the business world by the participants in the conversation, with its productivity being enhanced by the semantic-metaphoric transfer between the source and the target lexeme.

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## Notes

Note 1. As cited in Vaneva (2018, p. 8)

Note 2. The examples are taken from Vaneva (2019, p. 16)

Note 3. Insights taken from Zulch (2014, p. 178)

Note 4. Insights taken from Schneider, F. M., Maier, M., Lovrekovic, S. and Retzbach, A. (2015, p. 176).

Note 5. As Lazarevska-Stanchevska (2004, p. 2) cites Hopper and Traugott (1993), who talk about metaphor in *Grammaticalization*, Cambridge: CUP

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