Compounding as deviation from default: A pragmatic perspective

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Introduction

Newly formed **word-formation products** seem to be able to function as **names** “right from the beginning”:

**Adjective-noun phrases and compounds**

(1)  
   a. *#einsogenannter* heisser Tag
      ‘a so-called hot day’
   
   b. *einsogenannter* HeissTag
      ‘a so-called hot_day’

(2)  
   a. *#sogenannter* starker Regen
      ‘so-called heavy rain’
   
   b. *sogenannter* Starkregen
      ‘so-called heavy_rain’
Introduction

Are word-formation products generated by the same grammatical domain as phrasal products?

Lexicalist / separatist approaches:

Integrative approaches:

cf., among others, Booij (2010); Di Sciullo & Williams (1987); Lieber (1992), (2004)
Questions and roadmap

- Are novel compounds in comparison to phrases indeed more prone to function as names for lexical concepts?
- How is the naming function related to kind reference and semantic specialization in novel compounds?
- What pragmatic factors are involved in this interplay?

1. Evidence for the naming / labelling function of compounds: Focus on newly formed (A-N) complexes
2. Meaning specialization: A pragmatic perspective
3. Conclusion
How is the naming function of a complex expression defined?

Naming:
- establishes a sub-node in a conceptual-ontological taxonomy thus
- creating a sub-category of the category denoted by the head noun and
- adds a label to that category

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bags

shoulder bags  sports bags  hand bags

expression X  expression Y  expression Z

create a category

label it
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Naming as labelling

Phrases are less suitable for naming contexts than their compound counterparts:

(1)  
  a. Man nennt sowas ein rotes Dach.  
      'one calls this a red roof'
  b. Man nennt sowas ein Rotdach.  
      'one calls this a red_roof'

- *nenn*-environments identify **unfamiliar labels**
- *nenn*-environments **require worthiness of the label** to be identified as such
- (1a) provides a simple **object description** and not a category label

Naming as labelling

Phrases call for **additional marking** like quotes or capitals when they are used as labels.

Compare the examples in (a) and (b):

(1) a.  *Man nennt sowas ein “rotes Dach”*.  
‘one calls this a red roof’

   b.  *Man nennt sowas ein Rotdach.*  
‘one calls this a red_roof’

(2) a.  *ein sogenanntes “schwarzes Loch” / Schwarzes Loch*  
‘a so-called black hole’

   b.  *sogenanntes Schwarzlicht*  
‘so-called black_light’
Naming as labelling

Support from corpus data: Frequency of quotes / capitals with

| sogenanntes Schwarzlicht | (‘black_light’) |
| sogenanntes schwarzes Loch | (‘black hole’) |

We can conclude that compounds provide labels more easily in comparison to their phrasal counterparts.
Naming as labelling

“Label nouns” (e.g., Flüchtling) sanction a **temporal dissociation** between subject and predicative, see Rapp (2014):

(1) a. Mein Arbeitskollege ist ein ??Flüchtender / Flüchtling aus dem Tschad.
   ‘my colleague is a flee-PARTPRÄS_MASC’ / flee-EE (refugee) from Chad’

Crucially, the same holds for **compound nouns**:

(2) a. Nur einer der Professoren ist ein ??Kind / Kindergartenkind.
   ‘only one of the professors is a child / a kindergarten child’

   ‘only one of the professors is a pupil with top grades/ a top grades pupil’

> We can conclude that compounds easily adopt a **labelling function**.
Naming as referring to kinds

- A **kind** comprises the totality of all objects contained in the object’s extension.
- It thus represents a **conceptual category** of some sort.
- Names for kinds are associated with a **classifying** function.

Compounds easily accommodate **kind** interpretations:

(1) a. *Das ??rote Dach / Rotdach wurde in Belgien entwickelt.*
    ‘the red roof / red_roof was developed in Belgium’

    b. *Die ??schwarze Hyäne / Schwarzhyäne ist ausgestorben.*
    ‘the black hyena / black_hyena is extinct’

- We can conclude that compounds provide **names for kinds**.

cf. Bücking (2010); Krifka et al. (1995); Mueller-Reichau (2011)
Descriptive nominal modifiers don’t combine with **classifying** ones:

1. a. **beeindruckende und Kanarische Kiefern**  
   ‘impressive and Canarian pines’  
   [descr + class]

   b. **beeindruckende und große Kiefern**  
   ‘impressive and big pines’  
   [descr + descr]

The same holds for **compound nouns**:

2. a. **beeindruckende und Großkiefern**  
   ‘impressive and big pines’  
   [descr + class]

   b. **Kanarische und Großkiefern**  
   ‘Canarian and big pines’  
   [class + class]

- We can conclude that compound modifiers embody **classifiers**.

A pragmatic approach

Basic idea:

Novel (A-N) compounds give rise to an **implicature** that they denote a **category**, **deviating in meaning** from the phrasal counterpart.

Crucially, this also holds for compounds that are **apparently identical in meaning** to their phrasal counterparts:

(1)  
    a. *Das ist eine extreme Analyse, fast schon eine Extremanalyse.*  
       ‘that is an extreme analysis almost an extreme_analysis’  
    b. ??*Das ist eine Extremanalyse, fast schon eine extreme Analyse.*

(2)  
    a. *Das ist ein kurzer Bericht, fast schon ein Kurzbericht.*  
       ‘that is a short report almost a short_report’  
    b. ??*Das ist ein Kurzbericht, fast schon ein kurzer Bericht.*

Scalar particles like **almost** signify that some property of the referent is not fully attained and that its **complement** still holds:  
**almost X → not X**

- Compounds constitute the **right** edge of some **category scale** interval.

A pragmatic approach: M-implicature

We can ascribe the effect to a **manner implicature**: 

*Deviance from the default form (i.e. the phrase) indicates deviance from the combination’s canonical denotation.*

- The implicature relates to **Levinson’s M-principle**:
  
  - *matchbox* → stereotypical box of a specific type
  - *box for matches* → non-stereotypical box

- **Q/R-based conflict** resolution à la Horn:
  
  - **Q**: Say as much as you can, given R and Quality
  - **R**: Say no more than you need to, given Q

  **Q**: *Heißtag* (‘hot_day’) is grammatically “marked” compared to *heißer Tag*
  
  **R**: *Heißtag* is not significantly more economical than *heißer Tag*

  *Heißtag* q-implicates *not-heißer_Tag*

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Meaning specialization

The analysis implies that the “markedness” of A-N compounds causes semantic specialization and kind interpretation:

Markedness > Semantic specialization / Kind interpretation

Semantic specialization and kind interpretation are effective “right from the beginning”. Lexicalization is, thus, seen as the effect of semantic specialization.

Semantic specialization: Intersectiveness

- A-N compounds allow non-intersective readings only

(1) a. *ein schneller Raucher* → intersective: sb. who is speedy
   ‘a speedy smoker’ → non-intersective: sb. who smokes speedily

b. *ein Schnellraucher* → non-intersective: sb. who smokes speedily
   ‘a speedy_smoker’

cf. Egg (2006); Schäfer (2011)
Meaning specialization

The analysis implies that the “markedness” of A-N compounds causes semantic specialization and kind interpretation:

\[
\text{Markedness} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Semantic specialization} / \text{Kind interpretation}
\]

Semantic specialization and kind interpretation are effective “right from the beginng”. Lexicalization is thus seen as the effect of semantic specialization.

\textit{Semantic specialization: Kind-sensitive ‘so’}

- With compounds, so-environments promote two readings:
  
  (1) a. So ein Stadtrad\textsubscript{x} möchte ich auch.
      ‘such a city\_bike I want too’

      \[
      \rightarrow \text{Stadtrad}_x \in \text{Stadtrad}_k 
      \quad (= \text{I want exactly this type of } \text{city bike, too})
      \]

      \[
      \rightarrow \text{Stadtrad}_x \in \text{Rad}_k 
      \quad (= \text{I want this type of } \text{bike, too})
      \]

- With phrases, the “sub-node” kind reading is prevalent:

  (2) a. So ein Rad für die Stadt\textsubscript{x} möchte ich auch.
      ‘such a bike for the city I want too’

      \[
      \rightarrow \text{Stadtrad}_x \in \text{Rad}_k 
      \quad (= \text{I want this type of } \text{bike, too})
      \]

cf. Umbach (2014)
Conclusion

- Compounds in German can take on a naming function “right from the beginning”.

- The interpretation of novel compounds can be ascribed to an M-implicature based on the markedness / novelty of the expression.

- The compounds’ affinity to be lexicalized results from their semantic specialization and kind interpretation – and not vice versa.

- The analysis is compatible with a rule-based grammar model, which upholds a categorial and functional distinction between word-formation and phrasal syntax.

Thank you.
References can be found in


The paper is available here: www.uni-kassel.de/go/haertl

For all other references see:

Härtl, H. (in prep.) Why word-formation is the short route to the lexicon – A pragmatic approach.