On the relation between word-formation and naming: A pragmatic perspective

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Novel compounds seem to be able to function as names “right from the beginning”.

**Adjective-noun phrases and compounds**

\[(1)\]

a. *ein sogenannter heißer Tag*

b. *ein sogenannter Heißtag*

\[(2)\]

a. *sogenannter starker Regen*

b. *sogenannter Starkregen*
Also, novel A-N compounds seem to be more salient in discourse.

In a questionnaire study, we found more causal attributions to the Stimulus role of a psych-verb if the role was realized by a novel compound:

(1)  \textit{Die flache Säge}_i begeistert Christoph, weil sie\textsubscript{i} / er …

(2)  \textit{Die Flachsäge}_i begeistert Christoph, weil sie\textsubscript{i} / er …

n\textsubscript{2} > n\textsubscript{1}

see Kotowski et al. (2013)
Questions and roadmap

➢ Are novel compounds in comparison to phrases indeed more prone to function as names?

➢ How is the naming function related to semantic specialization and lexicalization of novel compounds?

➢ What pragmatic factors are involved in this interplay?

1 Evidence for the naming function of compounds
2 Meaning specialization and lexicalization: A pragmatic perspective
3 Conclusion
Evidence for naming

Naming: can be defined as a function that establishes a node in a conceptual-ontological taxonomy.

- Descriptive nominal modifiers don’t combine with classifying (i.e. naming) ones:

  (1)  a. "beeindruckende und Kanarische Kiefern"  [DESCR + CLASS]
       b. "beeindruckende und große Kiefern"  [DESCR + DESCR]

  (2)  a. "beeindruckende und Großkiefern"  [DESCR + CLASS]
       b. "Kanarische und Großkiefern"  [CLASS + CLASS]

- We can conclude that compound modifiers embody classifiers, i.e. create naming expressions.

cf. Booij (2010); Härtl (2014)
Evidence for naming

- Compounds easily accommodate kind interpretations:
  1. a. Das ??rote Dach / Rotdach wurde in Belgien entwickelt.
     b. Die ??schwarze Hyäne / Schwarzhyäne ist ausgestorben.

- Lexicalized “labels” / names sanction a temporal dissociation between subject and predicative, see (2a):
  2. a. Mein Arbeitskollege ist ein ??Flüchtender / Flüchtling aus dem Tschad.

- We can conclude that compounds provide kind names and labels.

cf. Bücking (2010); see Rapp (2013)
Evidence for naming

- *almost* and scales
  
  (1) a. Die Situation ist sehr ernst, fast schon dramatisch.
      b. Das ist ein guter Gedanke, fast schon eine Theorie.

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

- Compounds are closer to the **right** edge of a **category scale**:
  
  (2) a. Das ist eine extreme Analyse, fast schon eine Extremanalyse.
      b. ??Das ist eine Extremanalyse, fast schon eine extreme Analyse.

  (3) a. Das ist ein kurzer Bericht, fast schon ein Kurzbericht.
      b. ??Das ist ein Kurzbericht, fast schon ein kurzer Bericht.

- We can conclude that compounds provide the **stronger category name**.

Meaning specialization

The meaning of a compound often deviates from the “purely” compositional meaning.

Intersectiveness

✔ A-N compounds allow non-intersective readings only

(1) a. *ein schöner Tänzer* → intersective: sb. who is beautiful
   → non-intersective: sb. who dances beautifully

   b. *ein Schöntänzer* → non-intersective: sb. who dances beautifully

Generally, novel A-N compounds do not denote their compositional meanings, cf. *Blauschachtel* (a box for blue items?), *Schmalmesser* (a knife used in narrow openings?).

Why is this so?

cf. Egg (2006); Schäfer (2011)
Observe that there is nothing in the compound itself that indicates the **shift in meaning**.

- Both the phrase as well as the compound suggest a **subsective** semantics:

  \[ \text{schmal}_{\text{A}} \text{ messer}_{\text{N}} \]
  \[ \parallel \text{AN} \parallel \subseteq \parallel \text{N} \parallel \]
  \[ \{x \mid x \text{ is } \text{A for an } \text{N}\} \]

- But compounds easily **accommodate** the kind interpretation and display meaning shifts:

  \[ \text{Schmalmesser}_{\text{ANC}} \]
  \[ \parallel \text{AN} \parallel \subseteq \parallel \text{N} \parallel \]
  \[ \{x \mid x \text{ is a kind of } \text{N associated with } \text{A}\} \]

The reason for the interpretational difference must lie in the **difference of form**.
Note that novel A-N compounds give rise to a relatively **strong novelty effect**.

Compare:

- Fahrradkiste — Flachkiste!
- Kamelhaarkamm — Weichkamm!

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

Deviance from the standard form (i.e. the phrase) indicates deviance from the stereotypical denotation.

The implicature relates to **Levinson’s M-principle**:

- box for matches → non-stereotypical box
- matchbox → stereotypical box of a specific type

cf. Barz (1996); Grice (1975); see Levinson (2000: 136ff.)
The analysis implies that the “markedness” of A-N compounds causes semantic specialization and kind interpretation:

Novelty > Semantic specialization / Kind interpretation

The affinity of compounds to be lexicalized can be seen as a result of the kind reading:

Kind interpretation > Kind name / Lexicalization
Compounds in German can take on a **naming function** “right from the beginning“.

The compounds’ novelty effect can be ascribed to a **manner implicature**.

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 compounds and phrases.

Thank you.
All cited references can be found in


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