

6. Compound Words, Blends, and Phrasal Words

The Structure of Words (Ling 350)

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What We'll Cover

1. Quiz #5
2. Compound Words
3. Blends
4. Phrasal Words
5. For next time

Compounds

- Compounds are complex words crafted by stringing two free morphemes together to create a new lexeme.
- We can refer to the words that make up a compound as its 'elements' or its 'constituents'.
- How is compounding different from derivation?
- How is it similar?







Compound Stress

- Compound words in English have a feature called compound stress. What is this?
- green house (a house that's green)
- gréenhouse (a translucent building used for growing plants)
- white house (a house that's white)
- Whíte House (the residency of POTUS)
- In disyllabic compounds, the first element is stressed.



Compounds and Idioms

- Compounds are kind of similar to idioms. What's an idiom?
- Idioms are lexical items that contain multiple words, like “throw up” and “kick the bucket.”
- Remember, the same strings of words that are used in idioms can *also* be used non-idiomatically.
- What's the idiomatic meaning of “throw up”?
- Of “kick the bucket”?
- What's the non-idiomatic meaning of “throw up”?
- Of “kick the bucket”?



Compounds and Idioms

- Similarly, the same string of words that can be a compound can also just be a phrase.
- What's meant by White House?
- What's meant by greenhouse?
- What's meant by white house?
- What's meant by green house?
- Some compounds are spelled without spaces between their components (*greenhouse*). Others aren't (*toy factory*). That is not a reliable indicator for something being a compound or not.



Compounds and Phrases

- Compounds are also like idioms in that both are lexical items. What's that mean again?
- The meaning of a compound word does not usually follow directly from the meanings of its two components.
- How do the lexemes relate in the following?

soup bowl

school house

black eye

Superbowl

White House

blue eye

hockey stick

tree house

match stick

bird house

Do activity 1 on your sheets.





a sour milkman

Compounds and Phrases

- A compound's internal elements can't be modified with outside words.

*a very blackboard

a very black board

a very black blackboard

- In the phrase “a sour milkman,” what's sour? The milkman – not the milk.
- How about “a big jailbreak” – what's big? The jailbreak – not the jail.
- What's hot in “a hot bathroom”?
The bathroom – not the bath.



Compounds

- As we said, compounds are lexical items. They function as a single word, syntactically and morphologically.
- They cannot have internal inflection.

bird house

bird bath

file cabinet

book store

blackboard

smartphone

man-eating

~bird's house

~bird's bath

*files cabinet

*books store

*blackerboard

*smarterphone

*men-eating

These two are grammatical as phrases, but mean something different than the compounds. A “bird’s house” could be a nest, and a “bird’s bath” could be a puddle.

Exceptions are calques from French, e.g. *attorneys-general*.



Compounds

- The head assigns the word class to the whole compound.
- In languages that mark gender, it assigns this as well.

het soepvlees “the soup meat” (neuter)

/supflejs/

het modefeest “the fashion party” (neuter)

de vleessoep “the meat soup”

(non-neuter)

de feestmode “the party fashion”

(non-neuter)

- We also think of the whole as a “kind” of the head. A *bird bath* is a kind of *bath*, not *bird*; a *church bell* is a kind of *bell*, not *church*, etc.
- Which constituent in a compound is (almost always) the head?

What generalizations can we make about compounds and inflection?



Compounds and Word Classes

- So, if you have a V+N compound like *swearword* or *playtime*, what's the word class of the compound?
- What about a N+V compound, like *steam-clean*?
- This pattern generally applies across the board.
- So what's going on with *runaway*, as in this article from 1994?
- Is *away* really the head of *runaway*, meaning 'a person who has run away'?



For Runaway, a Violent Death

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

A 13-year-old boy died Monday night, his mother said, because the pull of Bedford-Stuyvesant's troubled streets was too strong for him to resist. Gregory Wright was shot to death in that Brooklyn neighborhood after running away from a group home for troubled boys.

Gregory, who often ran away from school and from home, also ran away several times from a group home in Hawthorne, N.Y., returning

Ms. Wade said her son was arrested earlier this year on a gun possession charge. She said that older teenagers sometimes gave him their guns so that they would not be caught with them.

She said she had long tried to put her son in a place secure enough to keep him out of trouble. "I tried to get him into the system, a boarding school far away, but they said unless Gregory committed a crime they can't help me," she said.



HEADLESS COMPOUNDS??

Compounds

- A compound may be either **endocentric** or **exocentric**.
- So far, we've been talking about which kind?
- Endocentric compounds have heads; exocentric compounds don't.
- Exocentric compounds might coincidentally have the same word class as their rightmost element, but if the semantics don't work – if the whole is not, in some sense, a “kind” of the thing the head is – then that is sufficient to identify them as exocentric. (Like *loudmouth*, for example.)
- Do activity 2 on your sheet.



Primary and Secondary Compounds

- How do the elements relate together in the following compounds?

crime reporter

con artist

toy factory

horror writer

land lover

toy maker

- In N+N compounds, when the second element is derived from a verb, we are dealing with a secondary compound.
- These generally have a somewhat predictable meaning: Ver of N

crime reporter = reporter of crime

land lover = lover of land

horror writer = writer of horror

toy maker = maker of toys

- Other kinds of compounds, called primary compounds, are less predictable.

Compounds

- Interesting thing about compounds: The head is almost always a content word: N, A, V.
- But the non-head can be almost anything:

[French history]_{NP} teacher

[20th century]_{NP} welfare state

['one size fits all']_S solution

[go to hell]_S pants

[fun]_A shirt

[chicken]_N soup

Blends

- **Blends**, aka portmanteaux, are like compounds, except that one of the elements is **clipped**, especially at a point of phonetic or orthographic overlap.
- They are not usually headed in the same way that compounds are, but consistent blending with the same base can lead to reanalysis that changes the language.



Do activity 3 on your sheets.





Is this a compound?

Or is it a blend?

Phrasal Words

Can we consider *one-size-fits-all* to be a phrasal word?

- This is a term that Carstairs-McCarthy uses to refer to “complex items that function as words, yet whose internal structure is that of a clause or phrase” (p.73).
- Note that this is not really a term used outside of this textbook, so it’s not that important to us. What is important is recognizing that words like these are single lexemes, even though they are as long as phrases.

Do question 4 on your sheets.



jack-in-the-box is a phrasal word

For Next Time

- Midterm! (And its review.)
- No meeting next week.