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Cross-disciplinary issues in compounding (review)

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Cross-disciplinary issues in compounding. Ed. by SERGIO SCALISE and IRENE VOGEL.
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Reviewed by WIM ZONNEVELD, *Utrecht University*

Cross-disciplinary issues in compounding (CIC) brings together nineteen papers by thirty-three different authors on ‘compounds and issues related to compounds’ (vii) from a 2008 conference at Bologna, Italy, the home of both the Componet compound project and the European Network for Linguistic Morphology project. The editors aim ‘to yield a well-rounded book, not just a series of conference papers’ (vii) in a research field that is ‘rich and complex’ (12) and ‘currently at the center of attention in all areas of linguistics—both theoretical and applied’ (1). As a core issue they identify ‘the question of where and how compounds fit into the grammar, and ... the ways in which compounds challenge our view of the organization and architecture of the language capacity’ (vii).

The editors begin with ‘Why compounding?’ (1–18), which is not a question addressing the issue of why languages have the compounding process; rather, this introduction offers an overview of central issues concerning compounds that have been discussed in the literature, especially in recent years. Compounds are words exhibiting ‘internal syntax’ that is intriguingly ‘invisible’. In the English example *truck driver*, the two members exhibit a relation similar to that occurring in the phrase *driver of a taxi*, but such a relation remains unexpressed in the compound. Compounds have rich interpretive freedom, as is exemplified by the possible compound *tree man*. The authors in *CIC* appear to agree on a (‘prototype’) definition of compound: $[X \text{ } r \text{ } Y]_Z$, in which X, Y, and Z are lexical categories, and r is the (hidden) grammatical relation between X and Y. In endocentric compounding Z equals either X or Y (X: Italian *cassaforte* ‘(box + strong =) safe’, Y: English *deep sea*); in exocentric compounding Z equals neither X nor Y (Italian *sali scendi* ‘elevator’, English *to wrongfoot*). Endocentricity implies the presence of a head, while exocentricity the absence of one, where headhood implies supplying relevant features to the full word. If compounds are words (as the contributors of this volume largely appear to agree on) and if there is evidence for a separate

word-formation component in the grammar, then compound formation will take place in that component, that is, it is MORPHOLOGICAL (as opposed to syntactic).

The volume is divided into four sections: 'Delimiting the field', 'At the core of compounding', 'Typology and types of compounds', and 'Quantitative and psycholinguistic aspects of compounding'.

Arguably the most sweeping and challenging contribution is PETER ACKEMA and AD NEELEMAN's 'The role of syntax and morphology in compounding' (21–36) in the first section. They propose that syntax and morphology, when both viewed as offering operations that combine categories, are in direct competition: all other things being equal, syntax wins, acting as a blocking device. Using the notorious case of 'synthetic compounding', they argue that morphological [*truck*][*drive(-r)*] is blocked by syntactic [*drive (a) truck*] and [*drive-r (of a) truck*]: they have different word orders but an identical head, which in English is right in morphology but left in syntax. However, [[[*truckdrive*] -er]] is not blocked because [[*driver*] (*of a truck*)] is structurally different. Based on their investigation of Saramaccan (Suriname), they show that the proposed analysis correctly predicts that if a language lacks N + V compounding, it will also lack synthetic compounding.

In 'Constraints on compounds and incorporation' (37–56), MARIANNE MITHUN investigates noun incorporation in Kapampangan (the Philippines), Mohawk (North America), and Yup'ik (Alaska). This paper is appealing for its non-Western material in a crosslinguistic approach, showing that incorporation is not crosslinguistically homogeneous but exhibits a continuum. In Kapampangan it is 'more syntactic', whereas in Mohawk and Yup'ik it comes from word formation: that is, incorporation behaves as compounding in the former but as derivation in the latter. The status of Kapampangan remains least clear because 'more syntactic' incorporation is not explicitly defined. Their claim that the continuum represents historical stages that single languages can go through (rather than resulting from choices that languages synchronically make) is speculative in the absence of actual examples that are given diachronic analyses.

Drawing on material from Greek, ANGELA RALLI in 'Compounding versus derivation' (57–74) emphasizes that compounds can occur inside of derivational affixes. To support the claim that derivation and compounding can interact, Ralli discusses a historically single lexeme in three dialects, where it behaves respectively as a clear-cut lexeme, an affix, or 'a kind of prefixoid' (72). Rather than formulating a concrete formal proposal, she simply states that these last cases 'cannot be classified into one particular category' (72), adding the notion of a CLINE to an already vague description.

The second section begins with FABIO MONTERMINI's 'Units in compounding' (77–92), where he addresses two questions: What kind of linguistic units are compounds? What linguistic units are they made of? His answer to the first question is lexemes. Assuming 'lexeme' to be more or less synonymous with lexical item or 'word', this assumption implies that lexemes can be stored and can acquire idiosyncratic meanings. Conversely, compounding also resembles characteristically nonlexicalizing syntax in its ability to produce temporary formations that are not typically stored, such as cases of an apparent syntax-morphology loop with phrases in nonhead position, as illustrated by the Italian example, *copri-borsa dell'acqua calda* '[cover][bag of hot water]'. In answer to the second question, lexemes must be viewed as paradigmatic clusters, which explains why forms in compounds can be different from words in isolation.

GEERT BOOIJ's 'Compound construction: Schemas or analogy? A construction morphology perspective' (93–108) discusses rules of lexical items that typically occur just in compounds, for example, English *-gate* in its acquired meaning of 'political scandal'. This chapter examines a number of such cases, but it is not clear what the notion of schema contributes as a formalization of the behavior observed with those lexical items, other than a convenient summary of the assembled facts. That is, an explicit articulation of a 'theory of schemata' is lacking here. In 'The head in compounding' (109–26), SERGIO SCALISE and ANTONIO FÁBREGAS survey the features that typically percolate from a head to the full compound word: semantic, morphological, and category features, and (presumably) argument selection features. Problems for all of these feature

types are listed and assessed. The authors suggest that the position of the head (left/right) is neither universal nor parametric, but possibly associated with compound type.

ROCHELLE LIEBER's 'On the lexical semantics of compounds: Non-affixal (de)verbal compounds' (127–44) calls attention to an underinvestigated difference between synthetic compounds and nonaffixal deverbal compounds: the former prefer an object interpretation of their nonhead (*fire fighter*), while the latter usually allow a subject interpretation (*dog attack*). Lieber concludes that the crucial factor is the 'overt affix in synthetic compounds which has already bound an argument of the base verb at the time of compounding' (139). Independent semantic restrictions or encyclopedic knowledge, however, can interfere. In 'The phonology of compounds' (145–64), IRENE VOGEL adds the level of the composite group to the universal hierarchy of prosodic constituents, originally due to Nespor and Vogel (1986), in order to accommodate the often domain-specific compound phonology of many languages. This new domain replaces the clitic group, obviating the counterintuitive recursiveness of the prosodic word.

Less frequently investigated compound types are discussed in the third section. LAURIE BAUER, in 'The typology of exocentric compounding' (167–76), and GIORGIO F. ARCODIA, NICOLA GRANDI, and BERNHARD WÄLCHLI, in 'Coordination in compounding' (177–98), aim at a better understanding of (nonheaded or at least poorly headed) exocentric compounding (*pick-pocket*, *singer-songwriter*, *tradeoff*). Bauer concludes that exocentricity occurs in five major types in the languages of the world and is clearly 'marked' as being less common both crosslinguistically and within individual languages. Arcodia and colleagues show that hyperonymic coordination (Mandarin *dao-qiang* 'sword + spear = weapons') and hyponymic coordination (English *singer-songwriter*) have a highly skewed geographical distribution: the former is common in Eurasia, New Guinea, and Mesoamerica, while the latter occurs freely in Europe. Neither chapter discusses its interesting observations within a specific theoretical framework.

In 'Parasynthetic compounds: Data and theory' (199–218), CHIARA MELLONI and ANTONIETTA BISETTO discuss complex synthetic compounds that consist of compounds not found independently plus derivational suffixes (English *blue-eyed*; Russian *naperstok* 'on.finger.SUFF', **naperst*, **perstok*). Using examples from Slavic and Romance, they argue that these compounds can be fruitfully subjected to the approach used by Ackema and Neeleman in this volume, with compounding morphology as a 'last resort', preferring this approach to Booij's construction morphology (93–108). In contrast, construction morphology is the framework of choice (without any reference to the context provided by the volume) in LIVIO GAETA's corpus-enhanced analysis of 'Synthetic compounds: With special reference to German' (219–36). Similarly driven by corpus data is DAVIDE RICCA's 'Corpus data and theoretical implications: With special reference to Italian V-N compounds' (237–54). The corpus he uses consists of V + N Italian compounds (*portalettere* 'carry + letters = postman') occurring in sixteen years of newspaper issues. The proposal of this paper implies a difference between items that are or can be easily stored and those that simply occur as an output of a word-formation rule. Based directly on native-speaker behavior, this is one of the empirically more interesting contributions, and it is linked to Montermini's more formal theory-driven chapter, although the link could be further developed.

The contributions in the final section deal with the interpretation of (quasi)experimentally obtained data. Based on tasks involving visual lexical decision for Dutch and English compounds, such as word naming and eyetracking, R. HARALD BAAYEN, VICTOR KUPERMAN, and RAYMOND BERTRAM, in 'Frequency effects in compound processing' (257–70), argue that in processing speakers do not operate with 'a simple sequence of processing stages', but 'multiple sources of linguistic information are used dynamically as soon as they become available' (270). 'Computational issues in compounding processes' (271–86) by VITO PIRRELLI, VICTOR GUEVARA, and MARCO BARONI contains a detailed literature review of the major problem of NN compound interpretation, that is, compound parsing, in light of a computational background. It does not venture very far beyond the conclusion that the phenomenon is still a 'computational challenge'. In 'Relational competition during compound interpretation' (287–300), CHRISTINA L. GAGNÉ and THOMAS L. SPALDING investigate the relation *r* of prototypical compound structure. They argue that interpretation speed is immediately related to the number of competitors for *r*, and both constituent structure and conceptual knowledge are relevant to interpretation.

In 'Sign languages and compounding' (301–22), IRIT MEIR, MARK ARONOFF, WENDY SANDLER, and CAROL A. PADDEN examine the advantages of involving languages with a different modality in compound research. Most sign languages are young, which makes it possible to investigate how linguistic structure may emerge. Comparing relatively 'old' American Sign Language (with compounding extensively analyzed as long ago as Klima & Bellugi 1979) and 'young' Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language of the Israeli Negev desert, the authors find in the latter language that 'as particular forms become conventionalized in the community, both morphological and phonological structures begin to emerge' (301); grammaticalized word order appears to emerge comparatively early, and phonological form gradually becomes more compact. But the actual categories that emerge early (place names, for instance) are unexpected. The authors conclude on the one hand that their data show 'how linguistic structure is carved from a much more diffuse "language blob"', and on the other that at least in the case of compounds, 'structure simply happens' (321). This chapter, along with Ackema and Neeleman's, presents an in-depth investigation of the fundamental questions relating to this volume's topic, namely 'why compounding' in the first place.

Finally, 'First language acquisition of compounds' (323–44), by WOLFGANG U. DRESSLER, LAURA E. LETTNER, and KATHARINA KORECKY-KRÖLL, completes the last section. They argue, based on large corpora of early child speech in German, that compounding belongs to 'core morphology', which is acquired by the age of three. Acquisition proceeds in terms of factors such as frequency and productivity. Appealing to natural morphology, preferences for transparency, for binarity, and for figure-ground configurations are assumed to be 'derive[d] from more general, extralinguistic preferences' (343), although the nature of such preferences is not fully discussed.

This volume certainly fulfills the editors' intentions. Some chapters, as identified above, raise truly fundamental questions with challenging implications and possibly far-reaching conceptual consequences. Others are empirically and/or typologically ambitious, showing how little is known in important and vast areas, but also welcomingly contributing to them. The volume suffers to a certain extent, unavoidably perhaps, from overlaps with the *Oxford handbook of compounding* (Lieber & Štekauer 2009) [also reviewed in this issue—Eds.], but it remains true that it has a fully independent *raison d'être*. Including Guevara and Scalise's 'Searching for universals in compounds' (2008) in *CIC* would have been a worthy addition. Missing from *CIC* is any study in the area of second language acquisition, although its typological contributions suggest potentially rewarding results. Not all chapters are embedded in the overall volume to the same satisfying degree. None of its contributions seriously consider analyses in theoretical frameworks such as principles-and-parameters theory or optimality theory (although Ackema and Neeleman's comes close to the latter in spirit). Unfortunately, *CIC* was rather sloppily edited; it contains a sizable number of typographical errors and instances of poor English grammar and style, and the contributions could have been better organized. Some references in the body of the volume are missing from the overall references. These criticisms notwithstanding, no one, neither a specialist nor a general linguist, should be deterred from taking note of this very worthwhile publication.

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