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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH WORD COMBINATIONS AND COMPOUND WORDS

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ANNOTATION
This article focused the differences and similarities between word combinations and compound words in the English language. The concepts of "grammatical unity" and "semantic unity" of compound words are explored. A number of criteria including phonetic, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features are analyzed to distinguish compounds from phrases. Examples are provided to illustrate the practical application of each criterion.
KEYWORDS: *compound word, word combination, semantic unity, lexical unit, word formation.*

INTRODUCTION

In the field of general linguistics, word combinations (phrases) and compound words (compounds) occupy a significant and distinct position among the linguistic units essential for communication. These units are present in nearly all natural languages; however, the interpretation and conceptualization of their nature and characteristics vary widely across linguistic traditions. This variation is partly attributable to the unique structural features of individual languages, and partly to the specific theoretical approaches adopted by language specialists and native-speaking linguists. A comprehensive review of scholarly literature on this subject reveals a spectrum of viewpoints ranging from mutually reinforcing, unified interpretations to those that are markedly divergent or even contradictory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

These differing perspectives are not limited to the analysis of phrases and compounds as isolated phenomena, but also pertain to the comparative study of their shared and contrasting features. In the context of English, the classification and identification of compound words present a number of unresolved and often debated issues. One major source of difficulty lies in the historical evolution of many compound words from earlier word combinations. As a result, certain compounds still retain orthographic separation despite functioning as single lexical units. Consequently, distinguishing compound words from word combinations presents a considerable challenge. At the core of this issue lies the absence of a clear-cut boundary between a base and a word in English. As a result, the head component of a compound word often coincides, in form, with one of the components of a phrase. This formal similarity gives rise to significant linguistic ambiguities in the process of differentiating between compounds and phrases (Gradaleva 2015, p.1). We will attempt to explore the causes of compound words, beginning by presenting definitions of this linguistic unit given by linguists. A compound word is a linguistic phenomenon that may initially appear simple. For instance, Bauer (2003, p.695) defines this linguistic unit as "the formation of a new lexeme as a result of the combination of two or more lexemes". I.V. Arnold (1989, p.108) defines a compound word as follows: "it is a word composed of at least two bases, which can occur as independent (free) forms within the language system, but within a compound word, they possess a unified meaning and structural integrity, thus functioning as a distinct lexical unit within a sentence". Based on the views of scholars, it can be stated that the nature of compound words, and even their existence as an independent word-formation type, has been a subject of extensive discussion for a long time. There are two primary reasons for the difficulty in finding a satisfactory and universally accepted definition of the term "compound word". On the one hand, in some languages, the elements constituting the combination are not independent words but exist in the form of roots or bases. On the other hand, it is not always possible to draw a clear distinction between word combinations and compound words.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Although compound words in English and word combinations may appear similar in their external morphological structure, they differ orthographically and semantically. For example, *blackboard* (a board specifically intended for use in a classroom) versus *black board* (any board that is black in color). While I.S. Smirnitskiy (1959, p.118) does not provide a definitive definition, his work clearly highlights that a compound word is a grammatically unified unit. The scholar identifies semantic unity as a distinct characteristic alongside grammatical unity in relation to this linguistic unit. However, the author asserts that semantic unity cannot

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be considered an independent criterion, as it does not arise spontaneously but is, in fact, a consequence of grammatical integration. Therefore, semantic unity can only exist when the whole unit is grammatically expressed as a single form. It is worth noting that A.I. Smirnitskiy proposes that both semantic and grammatical unity should be considered in the process of defining a compound word. According to R.G. Makovey (2009, p.15), the grammatical integrity of a compound word is manifested through the following factors: "the loss of the grammatical meaning of the subordinate component, the rigid order of the constituent parts (a change of which invalidates the meaning of the compound word), the presence of a single primary stress, morphological characteristics, and designation via spelling (written as one word or separated by a hyphen).

In agreement with the views of linguists, it is necessary to compile a list of clear criteria for distinguishing between word combinations and compound words. Despite extensive research on the processes of forming word combinations and compound words, widely accepted criteria for defining a compound word are virtually non-existent. For instance, Donalies (2009, p.6) analyzes English compound words based on seven proposed criteria. We will present these verbatim below: a) the compound word is formed without affixes, b) it is written as a single word, c) it possesses a specific stress pattern, d) it incorporates linking elements, e) it is right-headed, f) it is entirely inflected in its formation, g) it is syntactically indivisible.

From these criteria, it is evident that some warrant serious consideration, while others give rise to doubt. English linguist Laurie Bauer (1997, p.72) distinguishes and explains word combinations and compound words through six criteria, which we present verbatim: 'It is believed that they are differentiated by: compounds are listed, compounds are written as a single word, compounds have fore-stress, the first element in a compound is syntactically isolated, compounds do not permit co-ordination and the head in a phrase can be replaced by one with the base word in a word combination, a phenomenon not observed in compound words.' The subsequent linguist, O.D. Meshkov (1976, p.177), evaluates the grammatical integration of a compound word based on internal and external features. According to him, internal features include phonetic, morphological, and orthographic characteristics, while external features are syntactic indicators. This classification can be interpreted as follows: internal features allow for the assessment of a particular lexical unit as a grammatically unified entity, whereas external features serve to determine the syntactic independence of this unit in speech.

Based on the preceding research, it can be stated that five primary criteria are distinguished in English linguistics for differentiating compound words and word combinations: phonetic, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic criteria. Below, we will discuss the essence of each criterion, its underlying principles, as well as specific challenges associated with their application in identifying compound words. The phonetic criterion is based on the presence of a single stress on the first component of a compound word (e.g., *apple cake* ['æpl keɪk]) and depends on the stress falling on the head word within a word combination or on an equal stress on each word (e.g., *apple pie* [æpl ˈpaɪ]). I. Plag (2003, p.173) draws attention to the fact that the phonetic criterion has exceptions, for instance, in compound words such as *scholar-activist* or *may flowers*, where the stress falls on the second component. Furthermore, stress falling on the second component is considered a normal occurrence in compound words, akin to stress on the first component. When identifying word combinations, it is essential to remember that stress is never placed on the first word.

The orthographic criterion is based on the writing characteristics of a word. The fact that a word is written as a single unit or separated by a hyphen indicates it is a compound word; for instance, *horsemint* (a desert mint) and *mule-fat* (a wild plant). However, the occasional possibility of English compound nouns being written separately complicates the process of identifying compound words. Furthermore, some lexical units may be written differently in various sources. For example, in the Merriam-Webster (2004) dictionary, both *rain forest* and *rainforest* (a rain forest) are recorded with identical definitions within the same dictionary. In such cases, if the lexical unit is written separately, other criteria must be consulted. Difficulties do not arise in identifying compound verbs and adjectives, as they are never written separately.

The morphological criterion posits that in compound words, bases are morphologically unified. For example, in a word like *pony-mad* (enthusiastic about ponies), the first component is a base and not an independent word (otherwise, the first component would be in the plural). In English, units such as *stone wall* and *speech sound* exist, positioned at the boundary between word combinations (with an adjective-determiner) and compound words (where noun bases function as the determining component). According to A.I. Smirnitskiy (1956, p.35), the first component can be considered an adjective, and the entire combination can be termed a word combination. In her research, I.V. Arnold (1986, p.114) analyzes the effectiveness of the adverbial modification method. First, she compares the word combination *black bird* with the compound word *blackbird*. In the former case, the adverb *very* can be added without losing the meaning of the combination, whereas this is not possible in the latter. At first glance, this method appears effective for identifying compound words. However, when distinguishing between compound words and word combinations, the researcher ascertains that this method does not function. For instance, the adverb *very* cannot be placed before word combinations such as *black market* and *black list* (a list of suspects), a situation akin to compound words. The presence of semantic unity in these cases provides grounds for assuming they are compound words. Simultaneously, according to the phonetic criterion, they are considered word combinations.

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The syntactic criterion hinges on the observation that while certain combinations can be ambiguous when distinguishing between word combinations and compound words, A.Gradaleva (2015, p.17) particularly those structured as 'adjective + noun,' the syntactic approach often yields definitive results. For instance, a gerund (the -ing form of a verb) cannot form a purely syntactical word combination with a noun. Consequently, entities such as *sleeping bag* and *running track* are unequivocally identified as compound words. Similarly, a combination of a Participle II and a noun (e.g., *broken-decker* (referring to a double-decker bus) exclusively denotes a compound word. In contrast, a word combination comprising a Participle I and a noun component (e.g., *freezing compartment*) is clearly distinguishable. The crucial distinction lies in transformational testing: *freezing compartment* can be transformed into *compartment freezes*, signifying a subordinate component and a noun word combination. Conversely, attempting to transform *sleeping bag* into *bag sleeps* results in a semantically illogical construct, thereby confirming its status as a gerund-noun compound and not a simple word combination.

The semantic criterion is predicated on the unified meaning of a compound word. As emphasized by R.S. Ginzburg, S.S. Khidekel, G.Yu. Knyazev, and A.A. Sankin (1979, p.143), the meaning of a compound word is constituted by the synthesis of the lexical meanings of its constituent components. For instance, the combination *horse parlor* possesses semantic unity, a characteristic inherent to compound words, as its meaning is intrinsically linked to the meanings of its components yet cannot be simply deduced from them. This unit does not denote a *room intended for horses*, but *rather a place for placing bets on horses participating in races.*

CONCLUSION

The practical application of criteria used to distinguish compound words from word combinations shows that the most effective and logically consistent approach involves the use of three main criteria. Greenbaum (1963, p.92) likewise recommends the application of exactly three criteria, namely semantic, orthographic, and phonological. However, among the five commonly accepted criteria phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic none can independently provide a definitive distinction between compounds and free word combinations in the English language. As such, relying solely on one criterion is insufficient. It is therefore advisable to apply multiple criteria ideally three that are best suited to the specific linguistic context. This multifactorial approach is more likely to yield accurate and reliable results. Furthermore, it is essential to consider that there exist certain linguistic units which lie at the boundary between compound words and word combinations. These are often transitional forms, gradually shifting from syntactic combinations toward lexicalized compounds. Such borderline cases are frequently subject to scholarly debate, as no single criterion can conclusively determine their status as either compounds or combinations. In our view, a word combination is a syntactic construction consisting of two or more independent words that are semantically and grammatically integrated. The component words in such combinations demonstrate shared morphological inflection, syntactic connectivity, and semantic interdependence. In contrast, a compound word is formed by combining two or more independent words into a single lexeme that denotes a third, distinct concept, entity, or phenomenon. The components in a compound are orthographically and phonologically fused, and semantically they function as a unified whole.

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