

## On the semantic structure of English and German compounds: Head-frame internal specifier selection as a principle of compound formation

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The creation of compounds is one of the most productive processes of word formation in Germanic languages. Structuralist research into the make-up of compounds has established a basic specifier and head (determinant – determinatum) structure in so-called endocentric (and by a similar token exocentric) compounds (cf. Marchand 1969). The basic semantic roles of head and specifier have been taken up across traditions of research as evident in Langacker's schema based-approach to compound formation (cf. 2008: 164-74). The basic semantic relation of specification in compounds, however, does not translate into a building block account of compound meaning. In fact, as shown by Benczes (2006), compounds can involve novel meaning that goes beyond the semantic scope of its individual members.

In view of the semantic analysis of compounds, one of the most blatant questions is how the elements of a compound are semantically related, i.e. whether there is some semantic structure underlying their formation. Downing's (1977) and Warren's (1978) studies provided first important evidence that the relation of compounds cannot be explained by a syntactic account but is rather grounded in conceptual schemas (e.g. whole-part as in *coat collar*). More recently, Ryder's work (1994) has picked up the issue of categorizing semantic relations in English compounds, and the advent of conceptual blending theory has contributed to the analysis of mapping processes in metaphorical compound constructions (cp., for example, Fauconnier and Turner's analysis of counterfactual compounds and constructions such as *computer desktop* and *land yacht* (2002), Coulson's analysis of *gun wound* (2001: 130-31), and Benczes' (2006) study on creative compounds in English). Despite these recent advances in cognitive linguistic research on compounding, the question of whether the selection of compound elements is conceptually guided has remained largely unaccounted for.

The present study explores this question in more detail by developing and supporting the hypothesis that the semantic frame of the compound head provides a basic conceptual map that inspires the selection of particular specifiers in the process of compound formation. The data is based on a selection of German hybrid compounds (e.g. *Abendshow* 'evening show') drawn from a corpus of anglicisms in the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* (cf. Onysko 2007). In addition, more frequent compound nouns in the BNC and rare forms taken from the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1906) are discussed to show whether frequently used terms as heads in compounds show prototypicality effects in the selection of specifiers. Previous investigations on a set of anglicisms in German as head elements of German compounds have indicated the existence of such head-frame internal clusters of specification. In the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* (2000) the anglicism *Show*, for example, is most frequently specified by TOPIC/CONTENTS of the show, followed by PARTICIPANTS in the show, SCREENING of the show, and AUDIENCE of the show. Finally, head-frame internal specifier selection emerges as a basic process underlying conceptual blending and metaphoric mappings in figurative (creative) compounds.

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