

<p><b>COMPOUNDING IN ENGLISH WORD FORMATION: A MORPHOLOGICAL AND FUNCTIONAL STUDY</b></p>		<p><b>Morphology</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> compounding, word creation, morphology, English linguistics, compound words, lexical structure, endocentric compounds, exocentric compounds, grammatical categories, lexicalization.</p>
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Compounding is discussed as one of the most productive word-formation processes in English. Compound words are created when two or more existing words are joined together to form a new lexical unit with a new meaning. The research covers the basic types of compound words, their structural models, orthographic forms and grammatical purposes. Special stress is laid on the classification of compounds into closed, open and hyphenated types and their distribution across grammatical categories such as compound nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The literature study is based on well-established linguistic research to clarify key concepts such as headedness, endocentric and exocentric compounds, and semantic transparency. The results of theoretical and experimental research demonstrate that the compound nouns are the most frequent and productive types in English, the other compound types are also involved in the flexibility and expansion of the vocabulary. The study generally emphasizes the importance of compounding in the development of the English vocabulary and its adaptation to the communicative needs.</p>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Compounding is a word production process, which involves the formation of new words from existing words. It is also known as composition from Latin which means “put together”. In English grammar, compounding happens when two or more words are mixed together to create a new lexical unit with a different meaning.

The present study investigates compound terms in English focusing on their major categories, the mechanisms of their formation, and their contextual usage. It also discusses the meaning of compound words and how to understand their meanings using examples. The present study is aimed at providing a full insight into the working of compound words in the English language by integrating the structural analysis with the practical demonstration.

Compounds can have different structures or words combined to make a new meaning. Sometimes they are written as one word (*sunglasses*), sometimes as two hyphenated words (*life-threatening*) and occasionally as two independent words (*football stadium*). There are three sorts of compound words:

Closed compounds - Compounds made of two words put together without a space between them, e.g.: *railroad, basketball, underground, backpack*.

Open compounds - are compounds constructed out of two words but with a gap between them, e.g., *spray paint, cream cheese, air conditioner, phone case*.

Hyphenated compounds – these are compounds formed by two or more words connected together with hyphens, e.g. *fat-free*, *mother-in-law*, *two-faced*.

Compound words in English can be distinct parts of speech depending on how they are generated and how they are used in a sentence. Compounds are often classified by linguists according to their grammatical category, such as compound nouns, compound verbs, compound adjectives, and compound adverbs (Taqiyyudin & Moehkardi, 2023).

Compound nouns are the most frequent and productive in English. These are commonly made up of combinations like noun + noun (*sunrise*), adjective + noun (*blackboard*), or verb + noun (*playground*). Compound nouns act as one noun element in phrases. They are inflected for plural and they are modified by determiners like simple nouns (Bauer, Lieber, & Plag, 2013).

Compound Adjectives - created when two or more parts are combined to describe a noun. Compound adjectives usually occur before the noun they describe. They are usually adjective plus adjective (*blue-green*), noun + adjective (*snow-white*) or adjective + noun (*short-term*). They act as single modifiers and are often written with hyphens (Bauer et al., 2013).

Compound Verbs – are less common than compound nouns, but are nonetheless important in the construction of English words. They can be combinations like noun + verb (*babysit*) or adjective + verb (*dry-clean*). Like ordinary verbs, compound verbs function as a single verbal unit and can take tense and aspect markers.

Compound adverbs are less common than other forms of compounds. They usually arise from combinations of adverbial words such as *nowadays* or *notwithstanding*. These compounds are single adverbial units that alter verbs, adjectives, or whole sentences. They are not as productive as noun or adjective compounds, but they do show that compounding is flexible across word classes (Bauer et al., 2013).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

For a long time, compounding has been acknowledged as one of the most productive word-formation processes in English morphology. Many linguists define compounding as the formation of a new lexical item by combining two or more free morphemes, with a defined meaning. Compound words differ from simple words in that they consist of more than one lexical element, but they behave as a unit in terms of meaning and grammar.

Lieber (2017) points out that compounds vary from conventional phrases in that they have lexical integrity, i.e. internal elements of compounds cannot be readily adjusted or separated. This makes compounding a major area of research for studying the growth and development of English vocabulary over time.

Some scholars have investigated the structural features of compound words. Headedness is one of the most essential structural elements in English compounding. The English compounds are, as Bauer (2003) states, generally right-headed, i.e. the rightmost element establishes the grammatical category and the basic meaning of the compound. For example, with the compound *toothbrush*, brush is the head, because the compound is a kind of brush. This pattern holds for many English compounds, and helps linguists to classify them methodically.

But not all compounds conform to this pattern. Some compounds, called exocentric compounds, lack a defined conceptual head. Marchand (1969) notes that in cases like pickpocket the meaning of the complete term cannot be immediately derived from each constituent, hence interpretation is less predictable.

Another key distinction in the literature is between *endocentric*, *exocentric* and *copulative* compounds. Endocentric compounds are those in which the compound is a subtype of the head, e.g. *blackbird* (a type of bird) (Bauer et al., 2013). On the other hand, exocentric compounds denote something outside the literal meaning of their constituents. For example, *redhead* refers to a person with red hair, not a kind of head. Copulative compounds connect two aspects that are of equal importance to the meaning, e.g. *bittersweet* (Plag, 2003). These categories illustrate that the meaning of compounds is not always simple and that semantic relations are crucial to the interpretation of compounds.

Besides semantic classification, study has also been done on the grammatical categories of compounds. Compounds can be part of speech as nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs as explained above. Compound nouns have been shown in studies to be the most prevalent and productive type in English (Bauer et al., 2013; Plag, 2003).

Compound nouns are prevalent not just in common talk but also in the language of science and media. They are incredibly flexible and important in communication. Compound adjectives are common as well, especially in descriptive situations, where they provide accurate and compact formulations, e.g., *long-term*, *well-known*. There are fewer compound verbs and compound adverbs, but these also demonstrate the great grammatical range of compounding.

Another area of importance explored in the literature is orthography. English compounds can be *closed*, *open* or *hyphenated*. Spelling standards often reflect the degree of lexicalization of a compound (Adams, 2001). For example, a compound may start out as two different words, then become hyphenated, and eventually be written as one closed word as it gets more entrenched in the language. This steady development indicates that compounding is not merely a morphological process but also a dynamic phenomenon, subject to usage and standardization.

How productive compounding is in today's English has also been the subject of research. Compounding remains highly productive, Lieber (2017) argues, because speakers can quickly build new words by mixing known constituents. This productivity may be especially seen in areas

of technology, business and social media where we often see novel compounds being developed. This theory is supported by empirical research such as Taqiyyudin and Moehkardi (2023) which indicate that compound nouns dominate authentic written texts and that new compounds keep appearing in recent publications.

In conclusion, the literature shows that compounding is a core process in English word development. It links morphology, semantics, and syntax by illustrating the interaction of structure and meaning inside a single lexical item. Theoretical studies offer precise foundations for understanding compound structure and classification, and empirical research shows how compounds function in practical language use. These findings together show that compounding is of great importance in vocabulary acquisition and that it continues to be an important topic in linguistic research.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is a qualitative descriptive study in the subject of morphology. The research is about compound words in modern English language usage. It is based on the document analysis and observation of linguistic corpora.

Data were gathered from:

- Academic linguistic literature on word development (Bauer, Plag, Lieber, Marchand)
- Online language databases and dictionaries (e.g. Thesaurus.com)
- Examples of actual language from written English sources such as academic publications, media pieces and common usage situations

The analysis adopts a categorization-based approach. Compound words are classified on the basis of:

1. Structural form (closed, open, hyphenated compounds)
2. Part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)
3. Semantic structure (endocentric, exocentric, copulative compounds)

The study then assesses patterns of use and productivity, comparing theoretical frameworks with empirical examples of modern English. Statistical modeling was not employed, but rather the focus is on a qualitative interpretation of the morphological patterns.

## 4. RESULTS

Analysis of compound word creation in English shows a number of regular patterns:

### 4.1 Shapes of Structures

Three main orthographic patterns were verified:

- Closed compounds (e.g. *chalkboard*, *backpack*) are particularly lexicalized and common in daily usage.
- Open compounds (*air conditioner*, *phone case*) are nevertheless popular, especially in younger or less lexicalized phrases.
- Hyphenated compound words (e.g. *mother-in-law*, *well-known*) are often employed to help with clarity and readability, especially in professional writing.

The statistics imply that orthographic variation often reflects the degree of lexical maturity of a compound.

### 4.2 Grammatical Categories

The most prominent group was the compound nouns. This is consistent with earlier linguistic research. They are common in general and specialist lexicon (e.g., *sunrise*, *playground*, *toothbrush*).

There is also plenty of use of compound adjectives, especially in descriptive settings (e.g. *long-term*, *blue-green*). Compound verbs (e.g. *babysit*, *dry-clean*) and compound adverbs (e.g. *nevertheless*, *currently*) are less common.

### 4.3 Types of Semantics

The classification of compounds is obviously different:

- Endocentric compounds are the most prevalent (e.g. *blackbird* = a kind of bird).
- Exocentric compounds are less regular for meaning (e.g., *redhead*).
- Copulative compounds convey two meaning relations (e.g., *bittersweet*).

These results demonstrate that the degree of semantic transparency varies substantially between types of compounds.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that compounding is a very productive and flexible morphological process in English. The predominance of compound nouns corroborates previous studies (Bauer et al., 2013; Plag, 2003), which have demonstrated that nouns are the core class in English word development.

The structural diversity between closed, open and hyphenated compounds shows that compounding is not static. Instead, it is a continuous process of lexicalization where terms that are used often become fixed forms in the language (Adams, 2001). This is why words like *toothbrush* are written as one word, but modern words like social media platform are open compounds.

From the semantic point of view, the endocentric-exocentric dichotomy is a reflection of the complexity of meaning production in English. Endocentric compounds are quite obvious, while exocentric compounds require context-based interpretation, which shows that meaning in compounding is not always compositional.

The data also supports the notion that compounding is directly related to linguistic innovation. In contemporary English, new compounds are being coined all the time, especially in discussions of technology and media, to efficiently convey new notions. This is consistent with Lieber (2017) who argues that compounding is one of the most productive methods for the expansion of the lexicon.

In sum, the interaction of structure, meaning and usage reveals how compounding is a pivotal factor in the construction of English vocabulary. It permits speakers to make accurate, inexpensive and adaptive utterances which are the basis of modern communication.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Compounding is one of the most essential and prolific methods of word-formation in English language. As pointed out in this study, it permits speakers to form new words by joining together already existing lexical pieces into a single meaningful unit. Unlike simple words, compounds exhibit the interplay between structure and meaning, displaying how morphology, syntax and semantics interact in word development. For this reason, compounding is not just a grammatical phenomenon, but a reflection of how language changes and adapts to new communicative demands.

The research indicates that the compound words can be classified in several ways. English compounds are often right-headed in structure, i.e. the second element establishes the grammatical category and the basic meaning of the word (Bauer, 2003; Lieber, 2017). Concerning semantics, compounds might be endocentric, exocentric or copulative according to the way in which meaning is produced within the word (Plag, 2003; Bauer et al., 2013). This is why some compounds are

transparent and easy to grasp, while others take more interpretation. The research also indicates that the most common and productive kind is compound nouns, but compound adjectives, verbs and adverbs also add to the flexibility of the English lexicon.

Another crucial element that the literature also emphasizes is the importance of the orthography. Compounds can be closed, open or hyphenated, and these spelling differences often represent stages of lexical development (Adams, 2001). With increased acceptance of their use, the compounds may change over time from open to closed forms. This indicates that compounding is not a set and static process, but a dynamic one, which is influenced by social, cultural and communication elements.

In general, the results of theoretical and empirical research confirm that compounding is still one of the fundamental mechanisms of word production in English. It is important for the development of vocabulary especially in the present setting of technology, media and ordinary communication. This study has demonstrated how compounding contributes to the diversity and adaptability of the English language by investigating the forms, structures, meanings and functions of compound words. Future research could explore the emergence of novel compounds in digital communication and how newly formed forms are interpreted by speakers in diverse circumstances.

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