

## THEORETICAL BASIS OF COMPOUND WORDS AND THEIR PROBLEMS IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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**Annotation:** This article is about the theoretical foundations of the compound words, different definitions given by the linguists about compounds and their issues in modern linguistics.

**Keywords:** compound word (CW), method of word composition, ways of word formation, Germanic family of languages, Old English (OE), process of simplification, immediate constituents (IC), specific features

A compound is a word composed of more than one free morpheme to form a new word. The lexical meaning of compounds might be different from the meaning of its components in isolation. The components of the compound words can be either of the same part of speech or may belong to other parts of speech. Being holistic and concise, word-composition serves to enrich the vocabulary of a language on a regular basis. Accordingly, it is a linguistic phenomenon of a great importance. The process of compounding or composition is one of the productive ways of word formation, especially this is observed in the Germanic languages including English, German and in some Turkic languages (Karakalpak) as well. In terms of the given research the compound words in the languages of Karakalpak, English and German will be analyzed and compared with one another from different points of view.

At present time different spheres of science are developing at fast pace, especially the area of information technology (IT) and many others that correspond to the phenomenon of compound words which come from other languages. Hence there is a great demand for learning compound words regardless of we like them or not. For example, *voice mail, homepage, touchscreen, smartphone, hardware, software, flash drive, search engine etc.* Word composition, like the rest types of word formation, has its own specific features that distinguish it from the latter in all aspects including semantically, structurally, phonetically. The research studies thoroughly the word composition process in three different languages, its peculiarities, classification, lexical and semantic features in the examples of Karakalpak, English and German languages. There are two approaches to the study of compound words: synchronic and diachronic. The synchronic approach is focused on structural and semantic features of compounds, i.e. it studies the present linguistic phenomena in the scope of word composition. And the diachronic approach deals with the changes that have occurred in the language through a period of time and how and in which way compound words have formed.

Compounds are made up of two ICs (immediate constituents), which are both derivational bases. The immediate constituents possess integrity and structural cohesion that make them

function as a separate lexical unit in a sentence. The structural cohesion of a compound may depend upon unity of stress, solid or hyphenated spelling, unity of morphological and syntactic functioning or, more often, upon the combined effect of several of these or similar phonetic, graphic, semantic, morphological or syntactic factors.

According to I.V Arnold<sup>1</sup>, the integrity of compound is manifest in its indivisibility, i.e. it is not possible to insert another word or word-groups between its elements. For instance, the word “sunbeam”, it is possible to put a word or several words between an article and the noun: a bright sunbeam, a bright and unexpected sunbeam. As the article ‘a’ is a separate word, no such insertion is admitted between the stems sun and beam, for they are not words, but morphemes here. There are three types of relations as for the structure of the compounds namely, the relations of the members to each other, the relation of the whole to its members, and correlation with equivalent free phrases. Some compounds are made up of determining and determined part, which can be also called *determinant* and *determinatum*<sup>2</sup>. The second stem in our case *beam*, is the basic part, the determinatum. The determinant sun serves to differentiate it from other beams. The determinatum is the grammatically most important part which undergoes inflection: *sunbeams*, *brothers-in-law*, *passers-by* etc.

“Many scholars have claimed that a compound is determined by the underlying concept, others have advocated stress some even seek the solution of the problem in spelling. ... Jespersen also introduced the criterion of concept and rejected Bloomfield’s criterion of stress. As for the criterion of stress it holds for certain types only ...

For a combination to be a compound, there is one condition to be fulfilled; the compound must be morphologically isolated from a parallel syntactic group. “*Blackbird*” has the morpho-phonetic stress pattern of a compound “black markets”, has not despite its phrasal meaning; the latter therefore is a syntactic group, morphologically speaking stress is a criterion here”. (*H. Marchand*)

“Word compounding is a process similar but not the same as telescoping or blends; two words are joined, but compounding differs in that no part of either is lost. For example, blackboard, bookcase, in the examples have been fused, making one word”. (*Sheard*)

“Word composition or compounding is a distinct type of words made up by joining together two stems (mostly stems of notional parts of speech)”. (*R.S. Ginzburg and others*)

“Among the word-like features of the forms which we class as compound words indivisibility is fairly frequent; we can say “black – I should say” bluish black-birds, but we do not use the compound word “*blackbird*” with a similar interruption”<sup>3</sup>. Generally, a compound member cannot, like a word in a phrase, serve as a constituent in a syntactic construction. The word “*black*” in the phrase “blackbirds” can be modified by “*very (very blackbirds)*”, but not so the compound – member “*black*” in “*blackbirds*”.

In the English language compound words have been used from time immemorial, since compounding is the most productive way of forming words. In Old English (OE)

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<sup>1</sup> I.V Arnold “The English Word”, 1986, M: Высшая школа, p.108

<sup>2</sup> H. Marchand “The Categories and Types of Present-day English Word-formation”, 1960, p 290

<sup>3</sup> O. Mominov “Lexicology of the English language”, Tashkent, 2006, p 44

compounds formed in the following way were very common: noun stem + noun stem. For example, heartache, earache, headache, rainbow etc. Also, another deverbal noun stem with a second element such as *manslaughter*>*mannslaecht* OE. In these examples a substantive is determined by the stem form of another substantive. There are a great number of words from OE period (although some of them are archaic now) as *boxtree*, *breastbone*, *deathbed*, *deathday*, *hazelnut*, and so on. From the ME period are recorded *bagpipe*, *armhole*, *bedchamber*, *bedclothes* and others. Besides the above mentioned, to this type of compounds we can refer adjective stem+noun stem forms as well: *holiday*, *sweetmeat*, *blueprint* etc.

Some compounds have saved their form in present-day English, while others have been modified resulting in that their stems are no longer homonymous to the corresponding forms. To be more specific the compounds themselves changed into root words. The phenomenon was studied by Russian scholars V. A. Bogoroditsky, L.A. Bulakhovsky and N.N. Amosova. The phenomenon is known as “simplification” in Linguistics, although firstly it was called in Russian “опрощение основы” – “simplification of stem”. Simplification is defined as “a morphological process by which a word of a complex morphological structure loses the meaning of its separate morphological parts and becomes a mere symbol of the notion given”<sup>4</sup>.

From English linguists J.C. Nesfield used the term disguised compounds for the linguistic process. Nesfield explained the process with the fact that when a morpheme becomes a constituent of a compound, this does not affect sound pattern. Exceptions to this rule signify therefore that the formation cannot be regarded as a compound at the present stage of the language development, although it might have been the result of compounding at some earlier stage. The degree of change can be very different. Sometimes compound is altered out of all recognition. Thus, in the name of the flower *daisy*, or in the word *woman* composition as the basis of the word’s origin can be discovered by etymological analysis only: *daisy*<OE *daezes*, *ease*, *day’s eye*; *woman*<OE *wifman*, i.e. *woman person*. Other examples are: *ought*<OE *awiht* ‘anything whatever’; *barn*<OE *bere-arn* ‘a place for keeping barley’; *elbow*<OE *elnoza*, i.e. ‘the bending of the arm’; *gossip*<OE *zodsibbe* ‘godparent’ (originally ‘fellow sponsor at baptism’ (sibb/sib means akin)); *husband*<OE *husbonda* ‘master of the house (from ‘bua’ dwell). Another language phenomenon that plays a substantial role in word composition is demotivation. Demotivation is closely connected with simplification, but not identical with it: rather they are different aspects of changes that may occur simultaneously. The process of demotivation can be defined in the following way: it is an etymological isolation when the word loses its ties with other word or words with which it was formerly connected and associated, and the word can be no longer understood as belonging to its original word-family<sup>5</sup>. For instance, *kidnap* ‘steal (a child) or carry off a person by illegal practice’ means ‘to seize a young goat’. The second

<sup>4</sup> Arnold I.V. “The English Word”, 1986; See: Богородицкий В. А. Общий курс русской грамматики\* 2-е изд. Казань, 1907. С. 13.

<sup>5</sup> I.V.Arnold “The English Word”, М: Высшая школа, 1986, p 132

syllable is from an obsolete word *nap*, probably closely related to *nab* (a slang word for ‘arrest’).

In present-day English all associations with goats or nabbing are forgotten, the word is isolated from its etymological relatives and functions as a simple sign. The linguistic phenomenon basically starts with semantic change, after which the change of sound form comes. There is a contradiction for some time between meaning and form, but in the long run this contradiction is overcome, as the word functions not on the strength of the meaning of the components, but as a whole indivisible structure. These two processes take place together. For example, *lady* < OE *hlaefdize* (half ‘loaf’, *dize* ‘knead’), i.e. the person who kneads bread; *lord* < OE *hlaford*, originally ‘breadkeeper’. In these examples both words have become morphologically indivisible and have changed their meaning, so that neither of them is connected with the word *loaf*.

Moreover, there are cases where one of the two processes, namely demotivation is complete, while simplification is still under way. The words *boatswain*, *cupboard*, *breakfast* can be examples of it, as they look like compounds thanks to their conservative spelling. Their spelling, in its turn, shows their origin, whereas they have changed their meaning and pronunciation completely and turned into simple signs for new notions<sup>6</sup>. For example, *breakfast* derives from the verb *break* ‘interrupt’, and the noun *fast* “going without food”. Phonetically, had it been a compound, it should sound [l'brerkfa:st], whereas in reality it is ['brekfast]. The compound is disguised as the vowels have changed which corresponds to the semantic change (the meaning in PE is ‘the first meal of the day’). To take another example *boatswain* ['bousn] ‘ship’s officer in charge of sails, rigging etc. summoning men to duty with whistle’ originates from Late OE *batswezen*. The first element is of course *boat*, while the second *swain* is archaic: its original meaning was ‘lad’. However, the word in present-day English means ‘a young rustic’ or ‘a bucolic lover’.

In addition to the above mentioned, R.S. Ginzburg states that many changes in the vocabulary of a language is caused by the process of simplification. According to Ginzburg, as the result of the phenomenon “root-morphemes may turn into affixational or semi-affixational, polymorphic words may become monomorphic, compound words may be transformed into derived or even simple words. There is no doubt, for instance, derived noun *friendship* goes back to the English word *freondscipe* in which the component *scipe* was a root-morpheme and a stem of the independently functioning word”<sup>7</sup>. He believes that some English suffixes such as *-hood*, *-dom*, *-like* have developed from root morphemes. Ginzburg also brings as an example the word “*husband*” which has become a simple monomorphic word in today’s English, whereas it was mainly made up of two word-building elements: *hus-bond-a*.

As for the formation of compounds in Old English, it is worth mentioning that for the expression of new ideas and concepts already existing resource was utilized. According to Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, “The language in this stage shows great flexibility, a

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<sup>6</sup> I.V. Arnold “The English Word”, М: Высшая школа, 1986, p 133

<sup>7</sup> R.S. Ginzburg and others “A Course in Modern English Lexicology”, М: Высшая школа, 1979, p 105

capacity for bending old words to new ones. By means of prefixes and suffixes a single root is made to yield a variety of derivatives, and the range of these is greatly extended by the ease with which compounds are formed (1951:64). The remarkable capacity of Old English for derivation and word-formation, and what variety and flexibility of expression it possessed. It was more resourceful in utilizing its native material than Modern English, which has come to rely to a large extent on its facility in borrowing and assimilating elements from other languages (1951:65). This tendency towards the formation of compound words seems to be characteristic for Germanic languages as well, now that such compounds exist not only in Old English, but also in Modern German. In any case, the use of compounds conferred the language a wide range of expression in the case of Old English, the language could testify and name the new objects, concepts and ideas through native expressions, although the former were being introduced precisely as a result of contacts of the Anglo-Saxons with the peoples that successively came to inhabit the island. Baugh and Cable in their “A History of English Language” (1951:65) have written that, “As a result of this capacity, Old English seems never to have been at a loss for a word to express even the abstractions of science, theology and metaphysics, which it came to know through contact with the church and the Latin culture”. Another factor that contributed to the formation of compounds during the Old English period was the synthetic character of compounds, although the analytic tendencies of the use of prepositions were already present (Fernandez, F, 1982: 209). In any case the abundance of inflections is considered defintory of the Old English Period, to the extent that it can also be known as the Period of Full Inflections. In this sense, as it will be seen in the analysis of the corpus, some compounds in the Old English are formed precisely through the absence of the prepositions. Moreover, this tendency still continues in Modern English, although instances of Old English constructions can be found, which are formed by N+N and which may be expressed through prepositions later on.

Apart from this, in compound nouns both *a main* and *a secondary accent* can be distinguished. There is a main word, which, at least in Modern English, tends to be located at the end of the nominal group. It seems clear that in either stage of the development of the language the grammatical function and the semantic category of the group is provided by the Nucleus of the construction which tends to be located at the end. In the same way, in a complex Noun phrase those words, which have a close relationship, tend to be located in the nearest possible position to it. Sometimes, the relationship is established between the words forming a compound noun ma become so close that they are regarded as a single word.

Fernandez remarks that (1982:515) the composition of word as a lexical process by means of the combination of forms or elements already existing in the language, is very frequent in the Old English Period. The commonest ways or procedures to form compounds during the period, according to the above-mentioned author, are:

- Noun + Noun
- Adjective + Noun
- Adverb + Noun

### CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is significant that the method of word-composition was one of the most productive ways of word formation, and a good number of compounds from OE period can be found in present day English that have saved their original forms or changed only partially. Scholars Arnold and Jespersen put forward an idea that compound words might be the integrity of compounds as a main distinguishing feature of the word type, while other linguists affirm that stress pattern is important in identifying word groups. Moreover, a great many changes happened in the language over the times and as a result of the process of simplification many compounds became affixational or semi affixational elements.

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