

**Pius ten Hacken (ed.): The semantics of compounding**  
**Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, 264 pp.,**  
**ISBN 978-1-107-09970-8**

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## 1 Overview

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in the study of compounds (see among others Lieber and Štekauer 2009; Scalise and Vogel 2010; Arndt-Lappe et al. 2016). *The Semantics of Compounding*, edited by Pius ten Hacken, focuses on the semantic aspect of compounding and examines the issue of how to determine the meaning of compounds.

The volume was inspired by the Workshop 130 “The Semantics of Compounding” that was organized at the 19th Congrès International des Linguistes/International Congress of Linguists, which took place in Geneva (21–27 July 2013). The primary goal of the volume is to advance our understanding of meaning in compounds by the use of three particular recent theories on the semantics of word formation. Thus, all chapters present work within three frameworks in which the semantic aspect plays a central role, namely Ray Jackendoff’s Parallel Architecture (PA), Rochelle Lieber’s Lexical Semantic Framework, and Pavol Štekauer’s Onomasiological Theory of word formation.

## 2 Content

The volume comprises twelve chapters; an introductory chapter, ten chapters that are divided into three parts, and a chapter that serves as a conclusion.

In the introductory chapter (i.e. Chapter 1), ten Hacken states the main motivation for the volume, introduces the reader to the study of the meaning of compounds, and summarizes the individual volume contributions.

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Chapter 1 is followed by three chapters (Chapters 2–4) that form the first part of the volume (“Part I Frameworks”). In Chapter 2, Ray Jackendoff addresses the issue of how the meaning of a noun-noun compound is built from the meanings of its constituent parts in conceptual semantics. Jackendoff treats the meaning of a compound as a function of the meanings of its constituents,  $F(X_1, X_2)$  and shows how his generative system creates an unlimited set of possible relations/functions.

In Chapter 3, Rochelle Lieber models the interpretation of different types of compounds within her Lexical Semantic Framework. She presents the way the meanings of words can be decomposed into the semantic skeleton and the semantic body. The skeleton contains aspects of meaning that are relevant to the syntax, and the body covers encyclopedic aspects of meaning. In Lieber’s framework, different interpretations follow from the characteristics of the skeleton and the body of the compound members, and the way these are co-indexed. For example, very similar skeletons and bodies give rise to coordinate interpretations.

In Chapter 4, Pavol Štekauer shows how different types of compounds can be analyzed within a cognitive approach, namely the Onomasiological Theory of word formation. The onomasiological approach puts emphasis on the way new words come into existence. Štekauer in this chapter analyzes word formation, in general, and compounding, in particular, as specific acts of naming by language users who choose particular naming strategies that are represented by a variety of onomasiological types.

Part II “Noun-noun compounds” comprises four chapters. In Chapter 5, Pierre Arnaud aims to categorize the modification relations in French relational subordinative [NN]<sub>N</sub> compounds. Arnaud proposes a detailed taxonomy of 58 relations between the head and the non-head in French noun-noun compounds and applies Jackendoff’s Conceptual Semantics model to parts of his data. He also applies the proposed taxonomy to a random sample of 200 English relational compounds.

In Chapter 6, Zoe Gavriilidou focuses on noun-noun constructs in Greek that consist of two inflected words. She classifies these formations based on the classification of Scalise and Bisetto (2009) and analyzes their semantics within Lieber’s Lexical Semantic Framework.

In Chapter 7, Ingmarie Mellenius and Maria Rosenberg focus on the semantics of compounds in Swedish child language. In particular, they examine 387 spontaneous noun-noun compounds produced by tree monolingual Swedish children and focus on the status of the head, the semantic relations between the constituents, and the frequency of these semantic relations. They classify semantic relations based on Jackendoff’s model of conceptual semantics.

In Chapter 8, Jesús Fernández-Domínguez focuses on English primary compounds. In particular, his aim is to compare the frameworks of Štekauer and Jackendoff using non-lexicalized subordinate noun-noun compounds that carry the semantic roles Agent and Instrument as testbed. The author concludes that despite that the two models focus on different aspects of meaning, both models are needed in order to get a better understanding of the semantics of compounds.

Part III “Other compound types” comprises three chapters. In Chapter 9, Carola Trips focuses on phrasal compounds in English and German. She examines their semantic properties within Jackendoff’s Parallel Architecture and also comments briefly on the way these properties can be accounted for in Lieber’s Lexical Semantic Framework.

In Chapter 10, Barbara Schlücker analyzes German adjective-noun compounds within Jackendoff's Parallel Architecture. She shows that these formations have a basic classificatory meaning and proposes the function "is a subtype" that captures the idea that these formations denote subconcepts of the concepts denoted by the head constituent.

In Chapter 11, Renáta Panocová focuses on the analysis of neoclassical compounds English and Russian within Štekauer's onomasiological approach to compounding. First she shows how neoclassical compounds can be analyzed in terms of onomasiological types and proposes that under the onomasiological approach there is no principled difference between neoclassical and other types of compounds, since in this approach one need not define whether a constituent is a stem or an affix. She also proposes that English neoclassical compounds belong to the system of word formation, whereas Russian neoclassical formations are borrowings and thus belong to the Lexicon.

In Chapter 12, which concludes the volume, Pius ten Hacken aims to compare the frameworks of Jackendoff, Lieber, and Štekauer in order to reveal similarities and differences between the three frameworks. The author concludes that although the three models are to some extent compatible, one has to choose one of the three frameworks as a starting point since the models make different assumptions with respect to meaning architecture.

### 3 General assessment

The volume under review is rich in data and it is informed by corpus data (e.g. Chapter 9) and child language (Chapter 7). The volume is carefully edited, the chapters contain appropriate cross-references, and both the front matter and the back matter provide the reader with useful information.

The volume meets its primary goal, that is, to enquire into the way three particular recent theories on the semantics of word formation can advance our understanding of meaning in compounds. This goal, nevertheless, has an impact on Part I of the volume which for the most part does not present original research. In particular, Chapter 2 is for the most part excerpted from Jackendoff (2010) and the reader is referred to that version for more discussion. Chapters 3 and 4 are also for the most part distillations of previous work conducted within Rochelle Lieber's Lexical Semantic Framework and Pavol Štekauer's onomasiological approach respectively. This particular state of affairs, nevertheless, gives the opportunity to scholars who are interested in these frameworks to use this volume as a reference guide.

The volume covers a broad number of languages (English, Dutch, German, Greek, Swedish, French, and Russian). The selection of this set of languages, however, poses a limitation on the types of compounds that are covered in the volume. In particular, data come from Indo-European languages and, for the most part, the individual contributions tackle the semantics of nominal compounds. An analysis of other types of compounds (e.g. compounds headed by a verb) would have been a nice addition to the volume.

Despite a few shortcomings, it is really useful to note that although the three frameworks that figure in the volume make different background assumptions, they

provide us with an arsenal to tackle in a systematic manner the issue of how best to account for the semantics of compounds. Given that the relations between the members of compounds may never be exhaustive, this is certainly a non-trivial task.

How is the meaning of a compound built from the meanings of its constituents? Jackendoff offers an analysis within the realms of his framework of Conceptual Semantics. His analysis is based on that the meaning of a compound is a function ( $F$ ) of the meanings of its constituents. But how many and which are these functions? Jackendoff proposes 13 basic functions and a generative system that creates an unlimited set of possibilities for  $F$ . For example, in order to describe the meaning of *swordfish* one has to compose the basic functions PART and SIMILAR; a *swordfish* is a fish with a part that is like a sword. Jackendoff's account attributes an important role to pragmatics, in that given the simple syntax compounds are based on, pragmatic aspects of meaning are crucial for the interpretation of compounds.

In Lieber's account, there is a rather clear-cut distinction between the grammatical aspects and the pragmatic aspects of words, simple and complex. In particular, Lieber follows a decompositional approach (like Jackendoff does), and proposes two parts for the meaning of words: the skeleton and the body. The semantic skeleton contains aspects of meaning that are syntactically relevant, and the semantic body contains all aspects of meaning that are encyclopedic in nature. Both meaning parts play a role in the way the meaning of a compound is built. In subordinate compounds there is an argumental relation between the two compound members. In Lieber's framework, these compounds involve indexation between the nonhead element and a verbal argument of the head. Coordinate interpretations arise when both the skeleton and the body features of the compound members are identical except for a few encyclopedic aspects of meaning. Attributive interpretations arise in those compounds in which there is no argumental relation between the compound members that would give rise to a subordinate compound, and at the same time, the skeletons and bodies of the compound members are not compatible enough to be interpreted as coordinates.

Štekauer shifts the focus to the way speakers name a concept. This approach attributes no particular status to compounds since it is not based on the traditional classification of processes into compounding and affixation. Rather, it makes use of onomasiological types. In Štekauer's framework, the formation of compounds is viewed as a specific act of naming by a language user who actively chooses one of several naming strategies represented by various onomasiological types. Thus, this approach highlights the role of sociolinguistic factors in the naming of concepts.

In a nutshell, this volume gives a thorough overview of previous and recent theoretical approaches to the semantics of compounds. Considered collectively, the chapters in Part II and Part III of the volume extend the frameworks of Jackendoff, Lieber, and Štekauer across languages and, thus, offer a typology of semantic relations in compounds in Indo-European languages. To conclude, "The Semantics of Compounding" touches upon an issue that has escaped proper treatment in morphological theory and shows that although the analysis of the relations between the members of compounds may never be exhaustive, it is nevertheless systematic. As such, it is an informative contribution to the field.

**Acknowledgements** The author gratefully acknowledges funding by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft SFB 991 “The Structure of Representations in Language, Cognition, and Science” (Project: C08, “The semantics of derivational morphology: A frame-based approach”).

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