教授英文複合字有規則可循嗎？

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摘要

為了有效教授複合字，本文乃針對複合字之詞類、重音和意義加以探討。本研究主要發現如下：壹、判定複合字詞類之規則有二：(一)、一般而言，如果複合字右邊的字是內容字，則其詞類便和此內容字的詞類一樣。(二)、如果複合字右邊的字是功能字，則其詞類通常依左邊字的詞類而決定。貳、研究顯示有數個規則可以決定複合字的重音所在。舉例來說，複合名詞的主重音在第一個字，而其輕重音則在第二個字；由左邊是副詞、右邊是動詞所組成的複合動詞，其主重音在第二個字，輕重音在第一個字。由左邊是名詞、右邊是動詞所組成的複合動詞，其主重音在第一個字，輕重音在第二個字；當複合形容詞在定語的位置時，其重音通常在第一個字，但是當複合形容詞在謂語的位置時，其重音時常在最後一個字。參、就複合字的意義而言，複合字最右邊字的意義似乎是整個複合字意義的中心所在(Selkirk，1982)。

除上述外，本文亦根據研究結果提出教授複合字之建議。

關鍵詞：複合字、複合字最右邊的字、重音。
Are There Any Rules for Teaching Compounds?

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Abstract

To teach compounds effectively, this paper aims to explore the rules in terms of their grammatical categories, stress, and meaning. The major findings of this study are as follows. First, there are two rules to predict the grammatical categories of compounds:

(1). Generally speaking, if the head of compounds is the content word, the grammatical categories of compounds are determined by the right-hand words.

(2). If the head of compounds is the function word, the grammatical categories of compounds are usually determined by the left-hand words.

Second, there are several rules to determine the stress of compounds. For example, the primary stress of noun compounds is placed on the first element, and light stress is on the second. In the compound verbs made up of an adverb plus a verb and written as one word, strong stress usually falls on the second element of the compound and light stress on the first. When verb compounds consist of a noun followed by a verb, strong stress usually falls on the first element of the compound and light stress on the second. When an adjective compound is in attributive position, the accent will normally fall on the first element. And when it is in predicative position, the accent is often on the final element. Third, one generalization can be made about the meaning of compound. That is, the meaning of the head of the compound seems to be central in the meaning of the whole compound, at least for certain kinds of compounds (Selkirk, 1982). Additionally, the pedagogical implications are also suggested.

KEY WORDS: Compounds, Head, Stress
Introduction

There are several ways in which new words may be created. They are abbreviations, blends, derivational formation, backformation, acronyms, and compounds. First of all, entirely new, previously nonexistent words can enter a language through a process of abbreviation or shortening. For example, abbreviations such as TV and OK have come to replace longer words, television and okay. New words can also be formed from existing ones by various blending processes. According to Fromkin et al. (2003), blends are parts of the words that are combined to become a new word. Brunch, from breakfast + lunch and motel from motor + hotel are examples of blends.

Additionally, the words progressive and regressive (from progress and regress, respectively), are formed through a process called derivational formation; the word backform is created by a process called backformation. Backformation is a term used to refer to an abnormal type of word-formation when a shorter word is derived by deleting an imagined affix from a longer form already present in the language (Crystal, 1997). Acronyms are words derived from the initials of several words; laser from “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation” is one of the acronyms. Finally, two or more words may be joined to form new, compound words. The words boyfriend and girlfriend are examples of compounds.

It is universally acknowledged by linguists and language researchers (e.g., Bauer, 1983; Stockwell and Minkova, 2001; Wardhaugh, 1995; Shie, 2002) that compounding is a rich source of new words in English, and many compounds have entered the English language, such as spacemen, bus stop, mother-in-law, bad-tempered, moon-walk, and many others. This indicates that compound words are pretty common in present-day English.

In order to teach English compounds more effectively, there are three research questions to be explored: 1) Is the grammatical category of compounds predictable? 2) How are compounds stressed? 3) Are there any
generalizations about the meaning of compounds?

To find out the answers to these questions, we first examine the given definitions of compounds followed by differentiation between compounds and phrases. Next, we will explore the types of compounds. Then, heads of compounds will be examined. After that we will deal with how compounds are stressed. And finally, we will discuss the meaning of compounds; pedagogical implications will be drawn as a conclusion.

**Definitions of Compounds**

Classical grammarians often speak of compounding whenever two or more words are joined together in such a way that their independent status is not altogether obliterated. Thus Webster II distinguishes copulative compounding, for example, lions and tigers, in which the elements are coordinate; dependent or attributive compounding, in which one element stands in an oblique (e.g., genitive or instrumental) relation to the other, for example, the lion’s foot; and descriptive compounding, in which one element qualifies or describes the other, for example, houseboat, pea pod (Gleitman, 1970:71).

Ball (1939), however, claims that copulative compounding and dependent or attributive compounding can not be viewed as the properly compounded; instead, they are viewed as words preferably not compounded.

So what are the words properly compounded? In light of Ball’s viewpoint, two or more words used together to convey a unit idea (literal or not literal) that can not be conveyed by them either at all or clearly in unconnected succession, are properly compounded (i.e., joined together either with or without a hyphen). Also, compound words for which a hyphen is not specifically provided are written as solid compounds. The examples cited below are solid compounds: *airship, heartstrings, carefree, fireproof, gainsay, and woodwork*.

Fromkin, et al. (2003) provide simple, easily-understood definitions
for compounds. They point out that two or more words may be joined to form new, compound words. Whether a compound is spelled with a space between the two words, with a hyphen, or with no separation at all depends on the idiosyncrasies of the particular compound, as shown, for example, in *blackbird*, *gold-tail*, and *smoke screen*.

Although two-word compounds are the most common in English, it would be difficult to state an upper limit: Consider *four-time loser*, *three-dimensional space-time*, and *bad-tempered mother-in-law*. We will not consider compounds with more than two words in the present study in that two-word compounds are the most common in English.

### Compounds vs. Phrases

A question is often posed: How can we distinguish the differences between phrases and compounds? Take ‘wet day’ and ‘small talk’ for example. Is ‘wet day’ and ‘small talk’ a phrase or a compound? To differentiate them, Adams (1973) suggests to employ the following three tests.

1. Can the adjective be premodified by an adverb?
   
   It is ok to use ‘very’ to modify “wet day”, but not “small talk.”

2. Can it assume the comparative form?
   
   “Wetter day” is possible, but not “smaller talk.”

3. Can it occupy the predicative position in a sentence with the head noun as subject?
   
   “The day is wet” makes sense, but not “The talk is small.”

So we can conclude that “small talk” is a compound, but “wet day” is a free phrase.

Moreover, stress plays a crucial part in distinguishing compounds from phrases. For example, the written form “lady killer,” if not pronounced, can be ambiguous. It may be a compound noun in which the primary stress is on the “lady” and means slayer of ladies. It may also be a free phrase in which lady functions as an adjective and the primary stress is
on the second word. In that case "lady killer" means that slayer is a lady. Obviously enough, stress determines not only the meaning but also a noun compound or a free phrase. Look at the following examples which make this point more distinctive.

ladyBUG (= a bug lady)  ladyBIRD (= a bird lady)
LADYbug (= a species of bug)  LADYbird (= a small round beetle)

The examples LADYbug and LADYbird (where capital letters indicate the location of the heaviest accent) are compounds whereas ladyBUG and lady BIRD (where the primary stress is on the second word) are phrases.

**Types of Compounds**

There are four major types of compounds in English: noun compounds, verb compounds, compound adjectives, and compound adverbs. Selkirk (1982) asserted that compounds in English are a type of word structure made up of two constituents, each belonging to one of the categories, noun, adjective, verb, adverb, and preposition. The compound itself may belong to the category, noun, verb, adjective, and adverb.

Noun compounds may consist of a noun, verb, preposition, adjective and adverb on the left and a noun on the right.

Examples:

Noun + Noun   Verb + Noun   Preposition + Noun
string apron   rattle snake  onlooker

Adjective + Noun   Adverb + Noun
running battle   overcoat

Verb compounds may consist of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and preposition followed by a verb.

Examples:

Noun + Verb   Verb + Verb   Adjective + Verb
boardwalk  makeshift  flying leap

Adverb + Verb   Preposition + Verb
downpour    outlive

It should also be noted that verb compounds may arise in three
different ways: by backformation from noun or adjective compounds, by
zero derivation from noun compounds and less often, in the same way as
other types of compounds, by linking two words together (Adams,

Examples:

(1). Backformation from noun or adjective compounds—*air-condition*,
    *mass-produce, backform*, and *book-keep*.

(2). Compound verbs formed by zero derivation—*blue-pencil*,
    *cold-shoulder, court-martial*, and *pitchfork*.

(3). Verb compounds from other sources—*half-starve, half-close*,
    *volume-expand, and short spin*.

Compound adjectives may consist of a noun, adjective, adverb, and
preposition followed by an adjective.

Examples:

Noun + Adjective   Adjective + Adjective
headstrong         bitter-sweet

Adverb + Adjective Preposition + Adjective
off-white           overwide

Compound adverbs may consist of a noun or an adverb followed by
an adverb; they may consist of a preposition or an adverb followed by a
noun. The following examples are taken from Roach (2000) and Grant

Examples:

Noun+ Adverb      Adverb+ Adverb
head-first        northeast

Preposition + Noun Adverb + Noun
outside           downtown

Two-word noun compounds are the most common in English
(Burling, 1992; Huddleston, 1984; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002).
Compound adverbs, however, are the least common ones. Having demonstrated the types of compounds, we will proceed to discuss heads of compounds in the following section.

Heads of Compounds

What is a head? What role does it play in the compounds? According to Fromkin, et al. (2003), the rightmost word in a compound is the head of the compound. For instance, the words pocket and cold are the heads of the compounds pickpocket and icy-cold, respectively. The head of each compound determines its broad meaning and grammatical category. Generally speaking, the part of speech of the whole compound is the same as the part of speech of the right most member of the compound, which is termed the head of the compound (Selkirk, 1982).

Now consider the examples as presented in the above section.

(1). Nouns:

Noun + Noun   Verb + Noun   Preposition + Noun
string apron   rattle snake  onlooker
Adjective + Noun   Adverb + Noun
running battle   overcoat

(2). Verbs:

Noun + Verb   Verb + Verb   Adjective + Verb
boardwalk     makeshift      flying leap
Adverb + Verb   Preposition + Verb
downpour      outline

(3). Adjectives:

Noun + Adjective   Adjective + Adjective
headstrong        bitter-sweet
Adverb + Adjective   Preposition + Adjective
off-white      oversize

In the examples cited above, it is very interesting to see that the categories of the compounds are decided by the right-hand words; that is, if
the right-hand word is a noun, the compound is a noun; if the right-hand word is a verb, the compound is a verb; and if the right-hand word is an adjective, then the compound is an adjective. The examples above can apply right-hand-word rule to generate the same grammatical categories. However, we do find some counterexamples to this rule.

Consider the following compound adverbs as shown in the previous section.

Examples:

- Noun + Adverb: head-first, northeast
- Preposition + Noun: outside, downtown

The above examples indicate that the grammatical categories of some compound adverbs such as head-first and northeast are determined by the right-hand words. The grammatical categories of compound adverbs such as outside and downtown, however, are not decided by the right-hand words since the heads of both compounds are nouns.

Now let us examine another type of compounds completely different from the four major types of compounds discussed.

Examples:

- Noun + Preposition: hanger-on
- Verb + Preposition: run away
- Adjective + Preposition: worn out

The above examples cannot apply right-hand-word rule to generate the same part of speech, because the right-hand words in each example are prepositions. As we can see, when a compound consists of a noun and a preposition, its part of speech is a noun; when a compound consists of a verb followed by a preposition, its grammatical category is a verb. In addition, when a compound is composed of an adjective followed by a preposition, its grammatical category is an adjective.

To conclude this segment, we can formulate two rules to predict the
grammatical categories of compounds:

(1). Generally speaking, if the head of compounds is the content word (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs), the grammatical categories of compounds are determined by the right-hand words.

(2). If the head of compounds is the function word (for example, preposition), then the grammatical categories of compounds are usually determined by the left-hand words.

**Stress of Compounds**

Stress plays an important role in providing compounds certain characteristics which in turn help to categorize compounds. Generally, compounds possess three different stresses: primary (strong), secondary (intermediate), and tertiary which is weak (Gleitman, 1970).

As far as stress is concerned, the question is quite simple. When is primary stress placed on the first constituent word of the compound and when on the second? A few rules can be given, although these are not completely reliable. Below we will explore the stress of compound nouns, compound verbs, adjective compounds, and adverb compounds.

Compound nouns characteristically have a strong stress on the first element and weaker stress on the second element (Sun, 2005; Roach, 2000; Kelly, 2000; Bowen, 1975). This very feature is also used to distinguish the differences between compound nouns and the free phrases. The primary stress of the two-word compound below lies in the first noun. We can write this feature as follows:

\[ N_1 \ N_2 \text{(BOY1 friend2)} \]

The compound noun boy friend is pronounced BOY friend (where capital letters indicate the location of the heaviest accent), not boy FRIEND.

Roach (2000) pointed out that in the compound verbs which are made up of an adverb plus a verb and written as one word, strong stress usually falls on the second element of the compound and light stress on the first:
underSTAND overLOOK overRUN
overFLOW outRUN overDO

However, when verb compounds consist of a noun followed by a verb, strong stress usually falls on the first element of the compound and light stress on the second. The examples below are taken from Celce-Murcia, et al. (1996):

HOUSEsit BABYsit LIPread HANDcuff GHOSTwrite

The accentuation of the verb compounds, to some certain extent, is more variable and hard to be predicted than the noun compounds. For instance, the accent falls on the first element, as in “HOUSEsit” but the accent falls on the second element, as in “bluePENCIL.”

As you will see, the adjective compounds actually take two stress patterns. When an adjective compound is in attributive position, the accent will normally fall on the first element, as in “HAND-picked men,” and a “MOTH-eaten suit.” In the examples above, HAND and MOTH indicate the location of the heaviest accent. In predicative position, the accent is often on the final element: the men were hand-PICKED (Adams, 1973; Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). However, it is not always so in every case. For example, “mock-HEROIC” seems to be accented on the second element even in attributive position. In short, the accentuation of adjective compounds, like the verb compounds, seems to be to some extent more variable than that of nominal compounds.

Now consider the stress of compound adverbs. When compounds function as adverbs and indicate location and direction, they are usually final-stressed:

head-FIRST north-EAST downSTREAM
downTOWN overSEAS outSIDE

In some cases, stress is used to contrast the meaning. For example, “WAR crime” is a particular kind of crime. And “SUNDAY school” is a particular kind of school, and accordingly, the emphasis in both cases is on the contrasting the first element. Still we can find the example to contrast
the second element.

Example:

I said eyeBROW, not eyeLASH.

In the above example the second elements contrasted are BROW and LASH.

Meaning of Compounds

The meaning of a compound is not always the sum of the meanings of its parts. For example, consider the contrast between the compounds alligator shoes and horseshoes: alligator shoes are shoes made from alligator hide; yet horseshoes are not shoes made from horsehide, but rather are iron "shoes" for horses' hooves (Akmajian et al., 1984). Similarly, a boathouse is a house for boats, but a cathouse is not a house for cats. (It is a slang for a house of prostitution or whorehouse.)

In the examples so far the meaning of each compound includes at least to some extent the meanings of the individual parts. However, many compounds do not include the meanings of the individual parts at all. A jack-in-a-box is a tropical tree, and a turncoat is a traitor (Fromkin et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, certain generalizations can be made about the meaning of compounds. For example, an apron string is a kind of string, whereas a string apron is kind of apron; in other words, the meaning of the head of the compound seems to be central in the meaning of the whole compound, at least for certain kinds of compounds (Selkirk, 1982).

Conclusion

In response to the first research question, two rules were formulated:

(1). Generally speaking, if the head of compounds is the content word (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs), the grammatical categories of compounds are determined by the right-hand words.

(2). If the head of compounds is the function word (for example,
preposition), then the grammatical categories of compounds are usually determined by the left-hand words.

Pertaining to the second research question, there are several rules found. In the noun compounds, the primary stress is placed on the first element, and light stress is on the second. In the compound verbs which are made up of an adverb plus a verb and written as one word such as *understand* and *overlook*, strong stress usually falls on the second element of the compound and light stress on the first. When verb compounds consist of a noun followed by a verb such as *babysit* and *lipread*, strong stress usually falls on the first element of the compound and light stress on the second. The adjective compounds actually take two stress patterns. When an adjective compound is in attributive position, the accent will normally fall on the first element, as in “HAND-picked men,” and a “MOTH-eaten suit.” When an adjective compound is in predicative position, the accent is often on the final element: the men were hand-picked. When compounds function as adverbs and indicate location and direction, they are usually final-stressed.

In answer to the third research question, one generalization can be made about meaning of compound. That is, the meaning of the head of the compound seems to be central in the meaning of the whole compound, at least for certain kinds of compounds.

Are there any rules for teaching compounds? It is pretty obvious that the answer is positive. We did find rules for teaching compounds. And these rules can be employed to facilitate EFL learners’ proficiency in English compounds. There are, however, two things to be noted. First, after examining aspects of compounds, we have found that learning the meaning of compounds could be the most difficult for foreign learners because the meaning of compounds may not be literal at all. Second, the accentuation of adjective compounds, like the verb compounds, seems to be to some extent more variable than that of nominal compounds. Therefore, we should urge
students to devote more time to learning the meaning of compounds and pay more attention to the stress of both verb compounds and compound adjectives.
References


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