

Semantic Peculiarities of Exocentric Compound Words in English

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Annotation: In this given article the author analyzed the semantic features and new formation and creation of the compound words in English. Also, she tried to learn that exocentric compound words is the creation of new lexical units based on the material and possibilities available in the language. This process serves to enrich the content of the language dictionary on a regular basis.

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Exocentric compounds are compounds in which either the morphosyntactic properties or the semantic category of the whole word do not correlate with one of its constituents. For instance, a dikbuik fat-belly fat person is not a type of belly, but a person with a fat belly.

English examples such as redhead 'a person with red hair', flat-foot 'policemen (slang)' and egg-head 'intellectual' abound. As far as I am aware, the first person to extend the notion of exocentricity from syntax to the morphological form of compounds was Bloomfield (1935: 235).

Most English compound nouns are endocentric. This means that the central meaning of the compound is carried by the head. The head of English compounds is on the right. In some cases, though, the central meaning isn't carried by the head. Such compounds are called exocentric.

The English compounds *newspaper*, *textbook*, *classroom*, *handbag* and *bookstore* are examples of endocentric compounds. The central meaning of each one is carried by the second word of the compound. For example, a newspaper is a kind of paper and a textbook is a kind of book. These compounds are hyponyms of their heads.

One of the most commonly used word forms today, which is considered to be holistic and concise, as well as productive, is compound words. Compound words are a very important and relevant phenomenon for all languages. The author affirms that most of the new words and compound words that come into our language are in English. For example, a cell phone, a cheeseburger, a playboy, and so on. The English word-formation system has its own linguistic features, and the study of the phenomenon of word-formation in terms of synchronous and diachronic periods of language development has always been a topical issue. Including compound words in English requires special attention.

With exocentric compounds, however, the central meaning of the compound isn't conveyed by the head. The meaning is external to the literal meaning of the compound. Examples of exocentric compounds include *scarecrow*, *redhead*, *pickpocket*, *showoff* and *paperback*. They're called exocentric because a scarecrow isn't a kind of crow and a redhead isn't a kind of head. A scarecrow is an object designed to scare not only crows but all birds, a redhead is a person with red hair, a

pickpocket is a person who steals from people's pockets, a showoff is a person who shows off, and a paperback is a book which is paper-bound. Notice that the word *showoff* doesn't contain a noun but rather a verb and a particle. When the words *show* and *off* are written separately, it's actually a verb.

Though compound nouns are usually endocentric, a large number are exocentric. With exocentric compounds, the central meaning isn't carried by the head but is external to the compound. Compound nouns usually consist of at least one noun, but not always. The compound *showoff* is an example of a compound noun which has no noun. Many phrasal verbs can also function as compound nouns such as *takeout*, *pickup*, *breakup*, *breakdown* and *takeoff*.

So In theoretical linguistics, a distinction is made between endocentric and exocentric constructions. A grammatical construction (for instance, a phrase or compound) is said to be endocentric if it fulfils the same linguistic function as one of its parts, and exocentric if it does not. The distinction reaches back at least to Bloomfield's work of the 1930s, who based it on terms by Pāṇini and Patañjali in Sanskrit grammar. Such a distinction is possible only in phrase structure grammars (constituency grammars), since in dependency grammars all constructions are necessarily endocentric.

An exocentric construction consists of two or more parts, whereby the one or the other of the parts cannot be viewed as providing the bulk of the semantic content of the whole. Further, the syntactic distribution of the whole cannot be viewed as being determined by the one or the other of the parts. The classic instance of an exocentric construction is the sentence (in a phrase structure grammar). The traditional binary division of the sentence (S) into a subject noun phrase (NP) and a predicate verb phrase (VP) was exocentric:

Hannibal destroyed Rome. - Sentence (S)

Since the whole is unlike either of its parts, it is exocentric. In other words, since the whole is neither a noun (N) like Hannibal nor a verb phrase (VP) like destroyed Rome but rather a sentence (S), it is exocentric. With the advent of X-bar theory in Transformational Grammar in the 1970s, this traditional exocentric division was largely abandoned and replaced by an endocentric analysis, whereby the sentence is viewed as an inflection phrase (IP), which is essentially a projection of the verb (a fact that makes the sentence a big VP in a sense). Thus, with the advent of X-bar theory, the endocentric vs. exocentric distinction started to become less important in transformational theories of syntax, for without the concept of exocentricity, the notion of endocentricity was becoming vacuous.

By contrast, in constraint-based syntactic theories, such as Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), exocentric constructions are still widely used, but with a different role. Exocentricity is used in the treatment of non-configurational languages. As constraint-based models such as LFG do not represent a "deep structure" at which non-configurational languages can be treated as configurational, the exocentric S is used to formally represent the flat structure inherent in a non-configurational language. Hence, in a constraints-based analysis of Warlpiri, an exocentric structure follows the auxiliary, dominating all of the verb, arguments and adjuncts which are not raised to the specifier position of the IP:

[IP [NP Ngarrka-ngku] [AUX ka] [S [NP wawirri][V panti-rni]]]

'The man is spearing the kangaroo'

In addition, in theories of morphology, the distinction remains, since certain compounds seem to require an exocentric analysis, e.g. have-not in Bill is a have-not. For a class of compounds described as exocentric.

The endo- vs. exocentric distinction is possible in phrase structure grammars (= constituency grammars), since they are constituency-based. The distinction is hardly present in dependency grammars, since they are dependency-based. In other words, dependency-based structures are necessarily endocentric, i.e. they are necessarily headed structures. Dependency grammars by definition were much less capable of acknowledging the types of divisions that constituency enables. Acknowledging exocentric structure necessitates that one posit more nodes in the syntactic (or morphological) structure than one has actual words or morphs in the phrase or sentence at hand. What this means is that a significant tradition in the study of syntax and grammar has been incapable from the start of acknowledging the endo- vs. exocentric distinction, a fact that has generated confusion about what should count as an endo- or exocentric structure.

Reference

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