



## Structural composition of compound words in English

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Article history:**

Received September 2024

Received in revised form

10 October 2024

Accepted 25 October 2024

Available online

15 November 2024

#### **Keywords:**

compound words,  
morphology,  
syntax,  
semantics,  
English linguistics.

### ABSTRACT

This research article explores the structural composition of compound words in English, analyzing their morphological, syntactic, and semantic characteristics. This article also examines the formation rules, classification, and usage patterns of compound words, providing insights into their role in modern English. The article highlights the dynamic nature of compound word structures and their significance in linguistic studies through a review of relevant literature and analysis of examples.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-3701-vol2-iss6-pp249-252>

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## Ingliz tilida qo'shma so'zlarning strukturaviy tuzilishi

### ANNOTATSIYA

#### **Kalit so'zlar:**

qo'shma so'zlar,  
morfologiya,  
sintaksis,  
semantika,  
ingliz tilshunosligi.

Mazkur maqolada ingliz tilida qo'shma so'zlarning strukturaviy tarkibi ularning morfologik, sintaktik va semantik xususiyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, maqolada qo'shma so'zlarning shakllanish qoidalari, tasnifi va qo'llanish usullarini va ularning zamonaviy ingliz tilidagi roli haqida tushuncha beradi. Mavzuga oid adabiyotlar tahlili va misollarni tahlil qilish orqali maqolada qo'shma so'z tuzilmalarining dinamik tabiati va ularning tilshunoslikdagi ahamiyatini yoritadi.

## Структурное строение сложных слов в английском языке

### АННОТАЦИЯ

#### **Ключевые слова:**

сложные слова,  
морфология,  
синтаксис,  
семантика,

В данной исследовательской статье рассматривается структура сложных слов в английском языке, включая их морфологические, синтаксические и семантические характеристики. Особое внимание уделяется правилам

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образования, классификации и моделям использования сложных слов, что позволяет глубже понять их роль в современном английском языке. На основе анализа примеров и обзора соответствующей литературы подчеркивается динамическая природа структур сложных слов, а также их значение для лингвистических исследований.

## INTRODUCTION

Compound words are one of the most dynamic and productive elements of the English lexicon, playing a crucial role in expansion and evolution of the language. They are formed by combining two or more lexical units to create a single word with a unique meaning. The study of compound words is essential for understanding how language users generate new words to express complex ideas and concepts efficiently.

Compounding, as a word-formation process, exists across many languages, but its rules and patterns vary significantly. In English, compounds are characterized by their structural flexibility and their ability to function across different grammatical categories, such as nouns (e.g., "toothbrush"), verbs (e.g., "proofread"), and adjectives (e.g., "blue-eyed").

The significance of compound words extends beyond morphology; their formation also reflects syntactic and semantic relationships between their constituent elements. For example, in the noun compound "toothbrush," the relationship between "tooth" and "brush" is transparent syntactically and semantically, where the modifier "tooth" specifies the type of brush. On the other hand, opaque compounds like "deadline" show a less transparent relationship, requiring contextual understanding.

By analyzing relevant linguistic theories and examples from modern usage, this research contributes to a better understanding of compound words as a fundamental component of English word-formation. The article highlights the challenges associated with interpreting compound words and their meanings, especially in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Compounding is one of the most productive word-formation processes in English (Bauer, 1983). Compounds can be categorized based on their structure into endocentric, exocentric, copulative, and appositional types (Plag, 2003). According to Katamba (1993), compound words can also be classified by their syntactic function, such as noun compounds (e.g., "toothpaste"), verb compounds (e.g., "proofread"), and adjective compounds (e.g., "bitter-sweet").

Compounds exhibit head-modifier structures morphologically, where the head determines the grammatical category of the compound (Bloomfield, 1933). Syntactically, compounds often follow word-order rules, with the head typically positioned on the right in English (Marchand, 1969).

Compound words can semantically have transparent or opaque meanings. For instance, "sunflower" has a transparent meaning, while "deadline" has an opaque meaning (Libben, 2006). The semantic relationships between the constituents of a compound word significantly influence its interpretation.

The morphological structure of compound words involves the combination of free morphemes, bound morphemes, or a mix of both. Common patterns include noun + noun (e.g., "doghouse"), adjective + noun (e.g., "blackboard"), and verb + noun (e.g., "pickpocket"). These patterns follow specific rules, often influenced by the syntactic and semantic relationship between the constituent elements.

Morphological compounds can be further divided into three major types:

- Root compounds are free morphemes, e.g., "bookstore."
- Affixal compounds: one or both elements include affixes, e.g., "self-control."
- Neoclassical compounds derived from Greek or Latin roots, e.g., "television."

The head-modifier relationship is a central feature of compound morphology. In English, the head is usually the rightmost constituent, determining the grammatical category and primary meaning of the compound (e.g., "doghouse" is a noun because "house" is a noun).

Another key feature of morphological compounds is productivity. Certain compound patterns, such as noun + noun, are highly productive in English, allowing speakers to create new compounds spontaneously. However, not all combinations are permissible, as phonological, semantic, and syntactic constraints influence their acceptability.

Stress patterns also play a crucial role in distinguishing compounds from noun phrases. In compounds, primary stress typically falls on the first element (e.g., "GREENhouse" vs. "green HOUSE").

The syntactic structure of compound words concerns how their constituent elements interact and conform to syntactic rules within sentences. Compound words can function as different parts of speech, including nouns, adjectives, and verbs, depending on their structure and context.

Noun compounds are among the most common and serve as single noun units (e.g., "toothbrush," "raincoat"). They can occupy subject or object positions in sentences.

Adjective compounds function as modifiers for nouns (e.g., "well-known," "blue-eyed"). Their placement usually follows standard adjective positioning rules.

Verb compounds often act as verbs or verb-like entities (e.g., "proofread," "overestimate").

In English, the syntactic head of a compound word is typically the rightmost element, which determines the compound's grammatical role. For instance, in "snowball," the noun "ball" serves as the head, defining the overall category of the compound.

Additionally, compound words can participate in syntactic transformations, such as pluralization and possessive constructions. For example:

Singular: "toothbrush"

Plural: "toothbrushes"

Possessive: "the toothbrush's bristles"

Syntactic constraints also affect compound formation. For instance, while "doghouse" is acceptable, reversing the order to "housedog" would imply a different or unintended meaning. Phrasal compounds, where one constituent is a phrase (e.g., "mother-in-law"), highlight how syntactic structures can become lexicalized over time.

The semantic structure of compound words refers to the relationship between their constituent elements and how their combined meanings contribute to the overall interpretation of the compound.

Transparent compounds can be directly inferred from its components (e.g., "sunflower," "toothpaste").

Opaque compounds cannot be easily derived from its individual components (e.g., "deadline," "hogwash").

Metaphorical compounds arise from metaphorical or figurative associations (e.g., "golden handshake").

Idiomatic compounds convey an idiomatic meaning not predictable from its constituents (e.g., "red tape").

The interpretation of a compound word often depends on cultural and contextual knowledge. Additionally, compounds may exhibit polysemy, where one compound word can have multiple related meanings based on context.

Thus, a compound word is a lexical unit formed by joining two or more roots and distinguished in speech by its unity. Unity means that it cannot be divided into parts, and that other elements (units) of the language cannot be inserted between the parts. The signs of unity are divided into internal (phonetic, morphological, orthographic) and external (syntactic) signs. If internal signs indicate the uniqueness of a single lexical unit, external signs allow us to assess the uniqueness of the lexical unit in speech. Modern English has a spelling of compound words. However, a compound word can be spelled differently by different authors in different dictionaries. For example: a device that amplifies sound - loudspeaker, loudspeaker, loudspeaker. There is also no consistency in the pronunciation of compound words of the same type. For example, if textbook (textbook) is pronounced with a hyphen, story-book is pronounced with a hyphen, and if reference book (information) is pronounced separately, at the same time the components of these words are in the same ratio. In all three cases, the semantic relationship is similar, and despite this, their orthographic unity is different. Thus, the graphic criterion can be used as an additional criterion in determining the accuracy.

### CONCLUSION

The structural structure of compound words in English showcases a dynamic interplay of morphology, syntax, and semantics. Understanding these structures provides valuable insights into the complexities of English word formation and enhances linguistic competence.

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