ON THE STATUS OF NOMINAL STRUCTURES

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Abstract: The present paper analyzes nominal structures which consist of two nouns and it aims to distinguish noun phrases from nominal compounds. It also presents the main methods used in both Germaninc and Romance languages.

Keywords: nominal structures, noun phrases, compounds

Nominal structure sconsisting of two nouns have been long analyzed in order to determine if they are compound nouns or noun phrases. For example, in English, the tests taken to differentiate the compounds from phrases refer to stress, to their semantics and syntax.

1. Stress

This test takes into account the distribution of the stress on the constituents of the nominal structure. Thus, the structures in which the stress is on the first constituent, such as those in (1a), are regarded as compound nouns, while the structures in which the stress is on the second constituent are noun phrases (1b).

(1) *a. watch-maker*
b. steel bridge

There are also cases in which the stress is variable, which makes difficult to distinguish the nominal structures: in (2a,b) the stress is on the second constituent, and in (2a1, b1) it falls on the first constituent. The reason for which the stress ranges is related to the fact that the constituent that is used less often tends to be stressed. For example, in the case of pastry which has *cake* as constituent (Birthday cake, Christmascake) and which does not emphasize the meaning of pastry as the word s*pie*, *tart* do, the stress is on the first constituent (2a). The same happens in the case of *oil*: the constituent that is less used is stressed (2b).

(2) *a. apple 'pie* *a*[1] *'apple cake*
b. olive 'oil *b*[1] *'corn oil* (Giegerich, 2009: 7)

Given the fact that the examples in (2) refer to the name of traditional dishes, Giegerich (2009: 7) considers these structures to be compounds. One can see that even within these

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nominal structures the stress is on the second constituent. This is considered by some linguists to bean exception in the case of compounds.

From the examples above it follows that noun phrases are those structures in which the stress is on the second constituent. In the case of compounds, the stress is variable: it usually falls on the first constituent, but there are some cases when it falls on the second constituent. Therefore, when the stress is on the second constituent of a structure consisting of two nouns, we cannot rely on this criterion if we want to distinguish a noun phrase from a compound.

2. Semantics

Another way of distinguishing the two categories refers to the semantic perspective: phrases are considered to be semantically transparent and productive, while compounds can not.

In order to be considered phrases, nominal structures consisting of two nouns must have the same features as a syntactic structure: to have a head and adjuncts. In English, when the head is a noun, the adjunct which is placed before the adjunct has attributive value (3a).

(3) *a. Cambridge student*
b. watch-maker

From the semantic point of view, the attribute - head structures such as the one in (3a) have no internal arguments and their predicate is implied: *a student living / studying at Cambridge*. However, structures such as the one in (3b) present arguments: N_1 is the argument of the predicate *make* which is found inN_2, and hence it results that N_1 is the complement ofN_2.

Regarding the attributive value, it is of two types: ascriptive and associative. The ascriptive value is generally given by adjectives and occurs in cases such as (4a), which mention the quality or property of the head noun. However, this value can be given also by nouns (4b).

(4) *a. black bird* *b. steel bridge*
small elephant *toy train* (Giegerich, 2009: 8)

The associative value is given by the adjectives which emphasize the relationship between the head noun and its modifier. Therefore, the structures in (5a) are interpreted as follows: the *financial advisor* is a "consultant dealing / associated with finances", *avian influenza* is "associated with birds flu". Many structures which present associative adjectives, such as those in (5a), have as equivalent a structure consisting of two nouns(5b):

(5) *a. financial advisor* *b. finance advisor*
avian influenza *bird 'flu* (Giegerich, 2009: 7)

Given the two values, ascriptive and associative, Giegerich (2009:12) considers that, in general, noun phrases should be associated with the ascriptive value and compounds with the

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associative value. Therefore, this criterion does not appear to establish a boundary between the two categories. The problem arises in the case of the term "oil" because the stress falls differently in the structures it isused (*olive oil* versus *cornoil*). This leads to the searching of another criterion to distinguish nominal complex structures.

3. Syntax

From the syntactic point of view, the two categories can be distinguished through the following three operations: the first syntactic operation concerns the coordination of the adjunctor of the head (6a), the second one refers to the modification of any of the elements of the structure (6b), and the third one to the replacement of the head with the pronoun *one*(6c):

(6) *a. steel and aluminium bridge;wooden bridges and fences*
vs. **clock and watch-maker; watch-maker and repairer*
b. steel suspension bridge; stainless steel bridge
vs. **waterproof watch-maker*
c. a wooden bridge and a steel one
vs. **a watch-maker and a cabinet one* (Giegerich, 2004: 5,6)

Taking into account the examples above, we can now seethe difference between the two categories. Therefore, unlike noun phrase, compounds may not be subject to coordination operations, modifying constituents or replacing the head noun with *one*.

The examples above show that, in English, it cannot be a clear distinction between noun phrases and compounds. While we have tried various tests to delimit the two categories, we cannot draw a sharp lineas long as they are intertwined at a time.

Regarding the semantic relationship between the constituents of a complex structure, in Italian it is marked syntactically, as opposed to English:

(7)	*a. coltello da pane*	*b. succo di limone*	*c. porta a ventri*
	bread knife	*lemon juice*	*glass door*

As shown in (7), Italian presents a preposition between the head noun and the modifier leading to the nature of the semantic relationship between the two nouns.Thus, in (7a) the modifier provides information about the purpose or the function of the head-noun: *bread* specifies the object usually cut by a *knife*. In (7b), the modifier refers to the origin of the object described by the head-noun: the *lemonjuice* results from squeezing the lemon. In (7c), the modifier mentions the material of the object described by the head noun: a *glass door* is a door made of glass.

In order to determine if the modifier is a prepositional phrase, Johnston and Busa[1] propose a test which involves the introduction of additional information between the head noun

[1]În *Qualia structure and the compositional interpretation of compounds, 1999.*

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and its modifier. Therefore, the examples in(8) and(9) have a noun phrase in which the head nounis modified by an adjunct and an adjective may appear between the head noun and the prepositional phrase:

(8) *a. coltello sul frigo* *b. coltello tagliente sul frigo*
(knife on the fridge) *(sharp knife on the fridge)*
(9) *a. bicchiere nel lavandino* *b. bicchiere sbeccato nel lavandino*
(glass in the sink) *(chipped glass in the sink)* (Johnston&Busa, 1999: 170)

Things are different in the case of the structures in (7). As we see in (10a), in Italian, the adjective cannot occur between the head noun and its modifier, but can occur only if it determines the entire structure (10b).

(10) *a.*coltello tagliente da pane* *b. [coltello da pane] tagliente*
(knife sharp bread) *([bread knife] sharp)* (Johnston& Busa, 1999: 171)

Based on the examples above, Johnston and Busa conclude that the Italian equivalents for the English compounds may not be modifying prepositional phrases, but rather bound elements of the Italian nominal structure.

As in Italian, in Romanian, the semantic relationship between the elements of nominal structure is syntactically marked by a preposition:

(11) *a. carte de bucate*
(cookbook)
b. detergent de rufe
(laundry detergent)
c. cutie de pantofi
(shoebox)
d. suc de fructe
(fruit juice)
e. gard de fier
(iron fence)

Although in Romanian there is only one preposition (*de* as opposed to *da*, *di*, *a*), we understand from (11a) that it is about a *book* that is used when preparing *food*, from (11b) that the *detergent* is used to wash laundry, and from (11c) that *box* is used to deposit *shoes*. In (11d), the modifier presents the origin of the object described by the head noun: the *juice* resulted from the squeezed *fruit*. In(11e), the modifier indicates the material of the object described by the head noun: a *fence iron* is a fence made of iron.

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Unlike Italian, in Romania nthe adjective may appear between the head noun and its modifier (12-16):

(12) *a. carte scumpă de bucate*
b. [carte de bucate] scumpă
(an expensive cookbook)
(13) *a. detergent bun de rufe*
b.[detergent de rufe] bun
(a good laudry detergent)
(14) *a. cutie neagră de pantofi*
b. [cutie de pantofi] neagră
(a black shoebox)
(15) *a. suc răcoritor de fructe*
b.[suc de fructe] răcoritor
(a refreshing fruit juice)
(16) *a. gard rezistent de fier*
b.[gard de fier] rezistent
(a resistant iron fence)

Given the examples above, we cannot consider the structures in (11) as being compound nouns. Even if they present some features of phraseological units which tend to be complex units welded by their frequent use, we also note that their weldingis not complete (12-16). Thus, these structures would rather be considered noun phrases, having the following structure:

(17) *head **Noun** + adjunct **Prepositional Phrase***
*Prepositional Phrase= Preposition **de** + Noun Phrase complement*

Conclusions:

The study showed that we cannot draw a clear line when distinguishing between noun phrases and compounds. Although various tests to differentiate these structures have been proposed, it is very difficult to distinguish them as they become thoroughly intertwined at a time. Regarding the English language, the stress does not play a significant role indistinguishing the two categories especially when it falls on the second constituent ofa complex structure. What seems to be really helpful for English is the syntactic criterion according to which, we noticed that as opposed to noun phrase, compounds cannot be subject to coordination operations, modifying constituents and replacing the head noun with the pronoun *one*. As for Italian, the Italian equivalents fort he English compounds represent bound elements of the Italian complex nominal structure. As far as the Romanian language is concerned, these complex structures

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would rather be noun phrases consisting of ahead – noun followed by an adjunct - prepositional phrase.

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