ON THE SEMANTICS OF SOME ENGLISH NOMINAL COMPOUNDS DENOTING OCCUPATIONS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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The semantics of linguistic expressions is frequently explained through conceptual/semantic frames. The word formation process involved in the creation of nominal compounds can be viewed as one guided by contiguous conceptual relations in the semantic frame of the head and between the semantic frames of the compound constituent elements. This paper will attempt to examine the relations underlying the emergence of modifiers in some English nominal compounds denoting occupations in the hospitality industry and the different groups of compounds formed thereby. These groups will be described in terms of prototypical contiguities, semantic niches and abstract schemas.

Key words: nominal compounds, semantic frame, niche, schema, contiguity

Frame semantics and compounds

An influential theory of encyclopaedic semantics reveals that lexical meanings are related to larger background knowledge structures referred to as frames (e.g. Fillmore 1985, Barsalou 1992). "Framing is pervasive in language: [. . .] all linguistic units evoke a semantic frame" (Croft, Cruse 2004: 40). As pointed out by Goldberg, an established semantic frame is evoked by each word sense (Goldberg 2010: 40). Within the frame, it is useful to distinguish a word sense's profile (Langacker 1987: 118) from the rest of the frame, and we can refer to the non-profiled aspect of a frame as the background frame (or "base" in Langacker's terminology). In his article "Frame and Contiguity" (Koch 1999: 139-67), Koch views the relations in a semantic frame in terms of contiguity, which he defines as "a salient relation that exists between the elements (or sub-frames) of a conceptual frame or between the frame as a whole and its elements" (ibid.: 154). Hence, an essential characteristic of contiguity is its dependency on the prototypical salience of associative links within a frame. Koch

specifically stresses the extralinguistic basis of this relationship: it is "our knowledge of the world that determines contiguities" (ibid.: 145).

A number of authors have analysed compounds in the context of frame semantics (Bagasheva 2012, Onysko 2010, Sweetser 1999, Dirven & Verspoor 2004 inter alia). Each of the components in a compound provides access to a frame and thus contributes to the overall meaning of the compound. Onysko contends that the semantic frame of the head lies at the centre of attention and the sub-frames in it are possible candidates of specification: "the semantic frame of the head offers a basic conceptual map from which specifiers can emerge via the instantiation of inherently contiguous sub-frames or meaning potentials" (Onysko 2010: 251). In his view, the modifier is conceptually grounded in the semantic frame of the head noun and the word formational process of nominal compounding (in English and German) is guided by contiguous conceptual relations in the semantic frame of the head. The frequency of realisation of individual meaning potentials can be indicative of the degree of contiguity between a certain conceptual domain and the head frame. This can lead to identification of productive and less productive frame-internal contiguities (ibid.).

Schemas and niches

Schemas in cognitive linguistics generalise over a number of more specific contexts, which are referred to as the elaborations or instantiations of the schemas (e.g. Langacker 1987, 2008). In Hüning's view, word formation processes often lead to the emergence of "semantic niches", i.e. groups of complex words "kept together by formal and semantic criteria and extendable via analogy" (Hüning 2009 quoted in Bagasheva 2012: 99). Bagasheva describes them as "lower-level or more specific, fleshed-out" schemas where the rightmost constituent is lexically specified (Bagasheva 2012: 72). A generalisation of these groups under abstract schemas can indicate how new complex words can be created following the same pattern. Bagasheva further clarifies the difference between a semantic niche and a schema: "A niche is narrower than a construction schema, since a niche has at least one of the constituents of the compounds lexically specified" (ibid.).

The assumption in this paper is that these lower-level schemas function as templates for the creation of word families which then occupy certain semantic niches. The instantiation of these schemas and the frequency of their occurrence are dependent on the frame-internal contiguities and their productivity.

Nouns and verbs: semantic prototypes

According to the cognitive approach to grammar, parts of speech (which are called *grammatical categories*) have a semantic basis. As Langacker (1987, 2008) has stated, an expression can profile either a thing or a relationship. What makes a word a noun is that it denotes a "thing", an entity in the domain of physical space, whereas verbs profile a "relation", an entity with a temporal dimension. The differences in the semantic prototypes of nouns and verbs can be expected to have an effect on the salience of the contiguity relations in the respective frames, hence on modifier selection in compounds.

Material and method

The hypothesis that modifiers arise through activation of certain contiguity relations in the head noun frame was tested on examples of English compounds denoting occupations in the hospitality industry. They were extracted from specialised dictionaries and career guides. The frequencies of the different types of modifiers were taken as an indication of the prototypicality degrees of the respective contiguity relations.

Compounds with a simplex head noun

The schematic characterisation of these compounds can be expected to be governed primarily by the properties of the semantic prototype of nouns, i.e. conceptualisation of the latter as physical objects composed of material substance, having a specific location in the space domain and no particular location in the time domain, and being conceptually independent of any participation in an event (Langacker 2008: 104).

Gender-marked compounds

In the majority of these compounds, the head noun profiles the Gender domain of the semantic frame: *doorman, barman, storeman, pantryman, cellarman, houseman, liftboy, chambermaid, barmaid, room maid, floor maid, housemaid.*[1] Using Conzett's term, we can speak of

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[1] The *-man* component is usually classified as a semi-affix or affixoid, suffix or suffixoid, (e.g. Pencheva 2004: 190). According to Booij, the introduction of the affixoid category does not solve the problem with the blurred boundary between compounding and derivation. He offers a combination between the model of the hierarchical lexicon and the idea of a constructional idiom dominated by a general N+N compounding schema. The constructional idiom, being a "partially lexically specified productive pattern", will derive most of its properties from the general schema and at the same time provide a semantically richer specification of *man* on account of its "recurrent conven-

"gender patterning" (Conzett 2010: 149). Pencheva's observation that gender marking is typical of occupations of lower social status (Pencheva 2001: 274) is fully applicable to the examples studied here. Part of these compounds also foreground the Age domain: *liftboy*, *busgirl*. Most of the masculine-gender and a few of the feminine-gender compounds co-exist with gender-neutral *-person* compounds (*door person*, *storeperson, cellar person*, *houseperson*, *chamber person*, even *bar person* in spite of the established *bartender*).

The most prominent contiguity in this type of compounds is Place – Person. The largest semantic niche is occupied by the *-man* /*-person* family, followed by the *-maid* family. All of them can be regarded as instantiations of the [PLACE, PERSON] generalised schema.
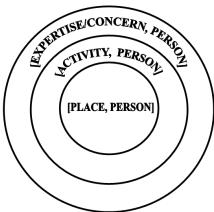
Individual examples instantiate the [ACTIVITY, PERSON] schema but are not numerous enough to constitute a semantic niche: *busboy, pageboy, watchman*. They can be seen as having a peripheral status in this category of compounds with a simplex head noun.

Gender-neutral compounds

The *-clerk* family predominantly instantiates the [PLACE, PERSON] schema: *desk clerk, front desk clerk, store clerk.*

Out of the two above groups, one compound (*nightwatchman*) results from the inclusion of an additional element, i.e. TIME, in the [ACTIVITY, PERSON] schema, and two compounds (*odd-job-man* and *reservations clerk*) instantiate the [EXPERTISE/CONCERN, PERSON] schema described below.

The prototypical contiguity which triggers the selection of a modifier in the compounds with a simplex head noun is Place – Person, whereas Activity – Person and Expertise/Concern – Person belong to the periphery of the category.

tionalized interpretation" (e.g. as *trader*, or as *attendant* in our examples) in the group of compounds instantiating the schema (Booij 2009: 208-209).

Agentive nominal compounds
Compounds with an -er/-or deverbal head noun

The semantic prototype of verbs involves an event which "cannot be conceptualized without conceptualizing the participants who interact to constitute it" (Langacker 2008: 104), some of the participant roles being agent, instrument, patient, recipient, beneficiary, experiencer, etc. (ibid.: 356).

Bagasheva believes that a compound verb "is postulated … in backstage cognition which drives the semantic computation/analysis of secondary compound nouns (both *-er* agentive and *-ing* activity ones)" (Bagasheva 2012: 93). However, in the case of synthetic agentive compounds denoting occupations it seems more appropriate to agree with Booij's objection against assuming N + V compounds as bases. Booij's explanation lies in the fact that N + V compounding is not productive (Lieber 2009, Booij 2009). Therefore he offers another analytical option, i.e. that compound nouns of the "fire extinguisher" type are cases of N + N compounding in which the head noun is a deverbal N (Booij 2009: 213). Although in nominalisation the conceptual entity undergoes a shift in profile from relation to a thing, the contiguity relations leading to the selection of a modifier are governed by the frame of the verb underlying the head noun. Some of the elements constituting this frame may be described via argument relations or semantic roles, i.e. object, instrument, manner, place, time, result (cf. Bagasheva 2012: 36-38, Ungerer 2007: 665).

The *manager* family

As suggested by Onysko, the semantic frame of *manager* "implies the institution as the action space of the manager, the object of the managing activity, and, in line with its agentive reference, the qualities and characteristics of a manager in exercising her/his profession" (Onysko 2010: 259). He sees these as the main meaning potentials constituting the "essential contiguous associations in the semantic frame of manager" (ibid.). The first two elements of the semantic frame as outlined by him overlap to a certain extent since the name of the institution or "action space" provides access to the entire range of activities performed at this institution/action space via the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy (e.g. *travel agency manager*, *front desk manager*, *golf course manager*, etc.). The compounds occupying the '*manager*' niche instantiate two lower-level schemas:

- [OBJECT, *manager*]: *food and beverage manager, catering manager, banquet manager, recruitment manager, employment manager, reservations manager, engineering manager, spa manager, store operations manager, production manager, attractions manager, shift manager, retail manager, account manager, destination manager.*

- [PLACE (OBJECT)[2], *manager*]: *travel agency manager, golf course manager, park manager, front desk manager, stage manager, rooms manager, theme park manager, casino manager, health club manager.*

The Object – Agent contiguity here appears more productive than the Place – Agent contiguity[3].

The *director* family exhibits the same contiguity relations, though within a more limited range: *rooms director, food and beverage director, cruise director, activities director, personnel director, wine director, spa director.*

A number of other, narrow-range families forming distinct niches can be considered the product of the same contiguity relations:

The *planner* family: *event planner, wedding planner, tour planner, menu planner, party planner, meeting planner.*

The *coordinator* family: *programme coordinator, wedding coordinator, conference coordinator, catering coordinator.*

The *supervisor* family: *floor supervisor, reservations supervisor, area supervisor.*

The *designer* family: *interior designer, theme park designer, ride designer.*

The *handler* family: *ground handler, baggage handler.*

The *leader* family: *outdoor trip leader, dive leader.*

Upon examination of the above compounds, we can outline the following mid-level sub-schema underlying their formation: [OBJECT/PLACE, AGENT $_{(-er/-or)}$], which is an instance of the generalised abstract schema [OBJECT/PLACE, AGENT].

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[2] This formulation is suggested on the basis of the assumption that WHOLE FOR PART metonymy operates on this part of the compound. A more detailed study of metonymic occurrences in compounds in the hospitality industry can be found in (Luizova-Horeva 2012).

[3] Booij speaks of "Inheritance of argument structure": the deverbal noun inherits the Patient argument of the verb, and the left constituent receives this Patient role (Booij 2009: 213)

Some isolated items also instantiate the [OBJECT, AGENT] schema: *tour operator*, *dishwasher* (*glasswasher*, *potwasher*), *food purchaser*.

The two examples of *-waiter* compounds found instantiate two different schemas: the [OBJECT, AGENT] schema (*wine waiter*), and the [PLACE, AGENT] schema (*bar waiter*).

However, the Object – Agent and Place – Agent contiguities are not salient in all agentive compounds with an *-er*/*-or* head noun. The first and most obvious example is the *instructor* family, where the EXPERTISE/CONCERN domain (formulation based on Onysko's DISCIPLINE/CONCERN domain, Onysko 2010: 265) is the most salient candidate for specification: *fitness instructor, exercise instructor, aerobics instructor, ski instructor, snowboard instructor, diving instructor, tennis instructor, scuba instructor*.

Individual agentive *-er* compounds also come under the [EXPERTISE/CONCERN, AGENT] schema: *food writer, travel writer, travel photographer*.

As will be shown below, the Expertise/Concern – Agent contiguity proves productive in the formation of other compounds as well, therefore the following generalised abstract schema can be formulated: [EXPERTISE/CONCERN, AGENT].

Compounds with an -ant deverbal head noun

The compounds of the *attendant* family occupy one of the largest semantic niches in the examined area, comparable only to that of the *manager* family. The Agent – Object (Place) interaction is again foregrounded in this type of compounds (mid-level sub-schema [OBJECT/PLACE, AGENT $_{(-ant)}$]): *cabin attendant, room attendant, swimming pool attendant, sauna attendant, cloakroom attendant, deckchair attendant, floor attendant, garage attendant, lavatory attendant, lift attendant, lobby attendant, flight attendant, front desk attendant*.
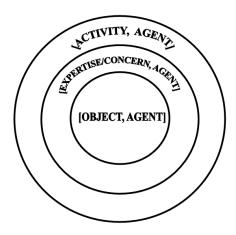
It should be stressed, however, that a number of these compounds have appeared as substitutes of compounds with a gender-marked head noun (*room maid – room attendant, liftboy – lift attendant, houseman – house attendant*,), where we can speak of "**inheritance of contiguity relations**", including inheritance of metaphtonymic relations (e.g. *bellboy – bell attendant*).

Two of the examples instantiate a mid-level sub-schema which is unusual for compounds denoting occupations, i.e. [ACTIVITY, AGENT $_{(-ant)}$]:

turn-down attendant and *bus attendant*[4]. The dominant schema can be expected to hinder the correct interpretation of the compound.

The *assistant* and *counsellor* families are quite heterogeneous: their members instantiate either the [EXPERTISE/CONCERN, AGENT] schema (*travel assistant, operations assistant, travel counsellor, youth counsellor*) or the [PLACE, AGENT] schema (*office assistant, camp counsellor*).

A conclusion can be drawn that agentive nouns also exhibit different degrees of prototypicality in terms of their salient contiguity relations. The Object – Agent and (Object-through-) Place – Agent contiguities belong to the prototypical core of the category. The Expertise – Concern and Activity – Agent contiguities are located in the periphery.

The *porter* family

The dominant conceptual contiguity guiding modifier selection in this type of compounds is Place – Person, hence they can be generalised under the [PLACE, PERSON] schema: *hall porter*, *house porter*, *kitchen porter*. One compound instantiates the [TIME, PERSON] schema (*night porter*) which occurs with the compounds having simplex head nouns. The examples show that the head noun *porter* has lost its relation to the parent verb meaning "to carry" and the head noun frame is of predominantly nominal nature. Consequently, the compounds in the *porter* family exhibit contiguities typical of those observed in compounds with simplex head nouns and therefore come close to the "thing" end of the relation – thing cline.

Compounds with "hybrid" head nouns

The head nouns in this group of compounds (*guide*, *cook*, *escort*) belong to conversion noun-verb pairs indicating that the basic concept

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[4] *Bus attendant* in hospitality industry as a more recent version of the gender-marked *busboy* / "busgirl".

underlying them can freely re-categorise from thing to relation and vice versa[5]. Verb frame elements, such as Agent, will be present in the head noun frame, imparting agentive nature to the respective compounds. The hybrid nature of the basic concept structured by the head noun frame determines the selection of modifiers by both verb frame-specific and noun frame-specific contiguities.

The *guide* family

The schema based on the semantic components [EXPERTISE/CONCERN, AGENT] is also instantiated by some of the members of the *guide* family: *outside adventure guide*, *outdoor recreation guide*, *scuba guide*.

Some of the occupants of the *guide* niche, i.e. *tour guide*, *tourist guide*, instantiate the [OBJECT, AGENT] schema; still others can be generalised under the [PLACE, AGENT] schema: *wilderness guide, outdoor guide*, *nature guide*, *mountain guide*, *town guide*.

The *cook* family

The compounds *fish cook*, *pastry cook*, *vegetable cook* can be generalised under the [OBJECT, AGENT]; *line cook* and *pantry cook* – under the [PLACE, AGENT] schema, and *grill cook*, *fry cook*, *prep cook*, *roast cook* – under the [ACTIVITY, AGENT] schema, which is more typical of simplex head noun frame contiguities.

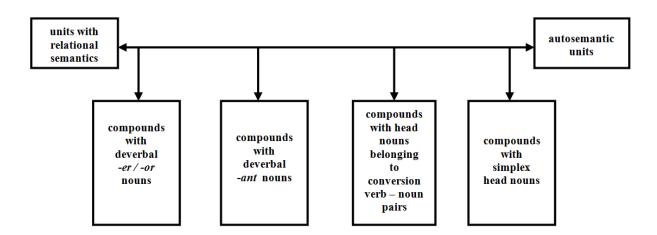The compound *tour escort* instantiates the [OBJECT, AGENT] schema.

The relation – thing cline

As seen above, the schematic characterisation of compounds with simplex head nouns is governed primarily by the properties of the semantic prototype of nouns, especially by their conceptualisation as physical objects having a specific location in the space domain. In synthetic compounds of the *-er/-or* and *-ant* types, the contiguity relations that result in modifier selection are governed by the frame of the verb underlying the head noun. In the third major group of compounds analysed, the "hybrid" nature of the concept structured by the head noun frame determines modifier selection by contiguities typical of both verb frames and noun frames.

Bagasheva suggests a cline with the linguistic units having entirely instrumental or relational semantics placed at one end, and those which she

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[5] According to Stekauer, "the most striking feature of conversion is that it linguistically expresses the *conceptual (onomasiological) recategorization* of extra-linguistic reality" (Stekauer 2005: 219-220).

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