How Words Relate to One Another

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This study examines relationship between exocentric compound words and their entities as used in media. It introduces a constituent-context analysis approach to be employed in exocentric compounding and media. The approach is grounded on pragmatic theory, which supports contextual knowledge of language items. Bell (1991/1995) outlines several reasons why language used in media is of interest in the field of research. Her writings generally reflect that language of the media can tell things both about media and language. Different media technologies, be it radio, television, newspaper, are used as channels to facilitate this information. The present paper based its investigation on on-line English newspapers produced and circulated in Lesotho. In support of Bell's declaration, the researcher's observation is that media is a powerful source of data for language features that researchers may want to explore.

Keywords: media language, exocentric compound, entity, pragmatic theory

Introduction

The paper examines the relations that hold between constituents that make up exocentric compound words and the entities such compound words refer to. The relations' identification is grounded on machine analysis WordNet 3.0 Similarity Tool (Kim & Baldwin, 2005). This is open software that allows a researcher to measure semantic relation similarity or relatedness between words.

Background and Theoretical Framework

Compound Words

Compounding may also be referred to as composition; hence compound words are sometimes called composites (Finegan, 2007). In many languages, compounding is the most frequently used means of building lexicon. Booij (2007, p. 74) mentions that the most pronounced property of compounding is that it consists of combining different lexemes to form larger words. This property makes compounding productive. Moreover, compound words' productivity is a result of their semantically translucent and flexible nature as stated by Jindal (2007, p. 89). That is, a compound word is formed from words whose meanings are already known since such words would have been in the language before. According to Booij, semantic pattern of a compound word that is generally observed is that in the form XY equals Z; X has something to do with Z or Y with Z. He shows that the exact nature of the semantic relation has no formal expression since it is the matter of the language user, "As language users, we have to interpret the relationship on the basis of the meanings of the compound

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constituents, our knowledge of the world, and, sometimes the context in which the compound is used” (p. 80). The analysis of the collected data is grounded on pragmatic theory which affirms that words are used primarily for communicative purposes.

Exocentric Compound Words

Generally speaking, exocentric compound words are compound words that do not refer to the entity mentioned by the head of the compound word, that is to say, *honeymoon* is not a type of *moon*, and instead the compound word refers to *a holiday taken by a newly married couple*. This means that the compound word requires a “special” semantic interpretation that is different from that used for compound words with “heads” (Bloomfield, 1933).

Methodology

The researcher collected data from feature stories excerpted from four quality newspapers of *Lesotho Times*, *Public Eye*, *Saturday Citizen*, and *Sunday Independence* picked randomly from on-line newspapers that circulate in Lesotho. Using WordNet Similarity Tool, each of the constituents is entered on the search bar and all senses (possible interpretations) attached to the constituent as a separate word, are displayed. A sense that is found closely related to the meaning of the compound word as a whole is chosen to be the relevant one; and is therefore the one used for analysis.

Relations Between Compound Constituents and Compound Entities

Previous researchers (Katamba, 1993; Anderson, 1992; Bauer, 2003) state that compound words provide names of entities, properties, and actions; hence there may be classes of compound words consisting of compound nouns, compound verbs, compound adjectives, and compound adverbs. This classification makes compound words enjoy independent status in the way as simple lexemes do. This paper aligns with Bauer that compound words are classified according to the role that they play in context.

It is generally observed that the relationship that holds between the constituent and the entity of a compound word in which they appear, does not radiate from the constituent that occupies the head position as in endocentric compound words, but any other constituent irrespective of its position in the compound word may contribute considerably in its meaning. This taps on the semantic exocentricity proposed by Scalise and Quevara 2006. It is noticed that when words are interpreted in usage, they possess “chameleon behaviour” hence various relations. The following section presents relations that hold between constituents and the entities of the compound words that they appear in. Bauer’s (1998), Yousefi’s (2009), Rallapalli and Paul’s (2012) works also feature relations which hold between constituents that make up a compound word.

Based on the findings of this study, it is observed that when words are interpreted in context, as advocated in pragmatic theory; they acquire chameleon behaviour. The data reveal a diversity of relations pertaining to compound constituents and compound entities. The Table 1 below shows a condensed presentation of exocentric compound constituents and exocentric compound entities’ relations.

Constituent-Compound Entity Relations

Table 1

Meanings of Exocentric Compound Words Adopted From WordNet Similarity 3.0 Tool

#	Constituent-compound entity relation	Exocentric compound word example	Exocentric compound word meaning
1	Transition	Undergo	Pass through
2	Action-Cause	Enterprise	A purposeful or industrious undertaking, especially one that requires effort or boldness
3	Result-Cause	Logjam	Any stoppage attributable to unusual activity
4	Part-Whole	Counterparts	A person or thing having same function or characteristics as another
5	Attribution	Anti-thesis	Exact opposite, the juxtaposition of contrasting words or ideas to give a feeling of balance
6	Purpose	Watchwords	A slogan used to rally support for a cause
7	Purpose-Action	Tagline	Laugh line, the point of a joke or humorous story
8	Location-Purpose	Household	A social unit living together
9	Receiver-Action	Landmark	An event marking a unique or important historical change of course or one on which important development depends
10	Action-Receiver	Stepping-stone	Any means of advancement
11	Position	Backdrop	Background, backcloth as scenery hung at back of stage
12	Position-Action	Offspring	The immediate descendants of a person
13	Action-Position	Tie-ups	A social or business relationship
14	Agent-Position	Line-up	A line of persons arranged in ranks
15	Position-Agent	On-lookers	Someone who looks on
16	Instrument-Position	Spear-headed	Lead
17	Time	Erstwhile	Belonging to some prior time
18	Time-Place	After-world	The place where you are after you die
19	Time-Action	Backlog	An accumulation of jobs not done or materials nor processed that are yet to deal with
20	Action-Time	Take-up	Pursues or resume
21	Action-Condition	Put-downs	A crushing remark
22	Activity-Oriented	Networks	An interconnected system of things or people
23	Status	Heavy weight	A person of exceptional importance and reputation
24	Agent-Agent	Motor-mouth	Someone who talks ceaselessly
25	Status-Agent	Archbishop	A bishop of highest rank
26	Action-Agent	Chairperson	An officer who preside
27	Purpose-Agent	Livestock	Any animals kept for use or profit
28	Agent-Condition	Honeymoon	A holiday taken by a newly married couple
29	Agent-Output	Mother-tongue	One's native language, the language learned by children and passed from one generation to the next
30	Intensity	Fever-pitch	A state of extreme excitement
31	Action-Intensity	Beef-up	Make strong or stronger
32	Intensity-Action	Overshadowed	Make appear small by comparison
33	Position-Intensity	Root-out	Destroy completely, as if down to roots
34	Outcome-Intensity	Breakthrough	A productive insight; an important discovery
35	Intensity-Outcome	Flip-flop	A decision to reverse an earlier decision
36	Metaphor	White collar	Of or designating salaried professional or clerical work or workers
37	Output-Input	Newborn	A baby from birth to four weeks
38	Input-Output	Rubber-stamp	Approve automatically
39	Input-Input	Makeshift	Something contrived to meet an urgent need or emergency, made or done using whatever available
40	Output-Distance	Crackdown	Severely repressive actions
41	Personality	Non-starter	A person with a record of failing, someone who loses consistently
42	Movement	Comebacks	Returns by a celebrity to some previously successful activity
43	Measurement	Scale-up	Increase proportionally

Conclusion

The paper establishes that the major basis of exocentric compound words classification and interpretation springs out of the communication purpose held by the speaker, hence a distinct preference of one compound constituent over the other. The research is a high-spot on how new exocentric compound words may be created and how a language can grow in general. Due to a diversity of relations, the paper also concludes that words are more loaded with subtle meanings and relations when investigated in context.

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