

On the semantics, headedness and classification of compound verbs (CVs)

The proposed paper focuses on problems in the interpretation and classification of compound verbs (on data from English and Bulgarian). CVs are not linguists' pets, unlike NN compounds, and the problems they pose have not been sufficiently addressed.

Major disputes surround the word-formation properties of CVs as they might be derived through composition proper, back-derivation (which has been excluded from grammatical morphology Dressler and Merlini Barabersisi 1994) or conversion. This implies that no uniformity can be sought for in at least the motivated (word-formation determined) meaning of CVs. Thus analysis of the lexico-semantic properties of CVs raises challenging questions concerning compositionality (Benzces 2006, Bundgaard et al. 2006, 2007), the status of their constituents as words or roots/stems or something else entirely (Bauer 2005, Trask 1999, etc.) and their meaning contribution, as well as headedness. The interdependence between meaning and the recognition of a head element are intricately intertwined and directly reflect on the classification of CVs. In view of the general (Scalise and Guevara 2006) and parameterized understanding of exocentricity (into categorical, morphological and semantic (Scalise, Fábregas and Forza, 2009) and the possibility of arriving at unified semantic analysis of word-formation niches (the latter interpreted as defined by Hüning 2009) of CVs in both English and Bulgarian, it will be suggested that we might need to refine the criteria for classifying CVs and to make allowances as to the possibility of an acategorical status of the internal constituents of CVs, in parallel to the claims of Hooper and Thompson (2004) that the determinants of nounhood and verbhood are predominantly pragmatic and are established at the level of discourse.

The standard classification into attributive, coordinate and subordinate (Bisetto and Scalise 2009, Lieber 2009) compounds with an endo- and exocentric subclass identifiable within each class will render *stir-fry* and *deep-fry* into different classes (a coordinate simultaneous for the former and subordinate manner for the latter). This sounds convincing if we view the two CVs as separate lexical items. In view of the existence of elaborated CVs word-formation niches (*-dry* family, *-stir* family, etc.) such a classification disrupts the uniformity and unified semantics of the word-formation niches.

The adoption of the acategorical status hypothesis and the uniformity of the semantics of word-formation niches (represented as clines of growing exocentricity) leads to the idea of a fluid classificatory scheme, based on the overall features of the word-formation niche. Such a classificatory scheme is plausible in the context of inheritance hierarchies, which allows for valid generalizations to be drawn at different levels of schematicity and granularity.

In the paper a hypothesis will be elaborated concerning the sub- vs. super-classification (McGregor 2002) of CVs (in English and Bulgarian) as an instance of epistemological classification, i.e. as systems of linguistic units that categorise a domain of (conceptual) referents (McGregor 2002: 22).

The approach is based on a synchronic dynamic view of language contextualized in the usage-based network model of language (Tomascello 2005; Bybee 2010). The argumentation is couched into largely overlapping or highly compatible theoretical frameworks – cognitive linguistics (including cognitive semantics – Croft and Cruse 2004; Evans 2007, 2009; Langacker 1987, 2008; Bybee 2010), frame semantics (Fillmore 1985; Goldebrg n.d.; Barsalou 1992; etc.) and construction morphology as developed by Booij (2005, 2007, and 2010), Goldberg (1995, 2006) and Masini (2009). The basic postulates and terms taken from the respective frameworks concern the understanding of the construction as a unit of analysis applicable at word level, the nature of schemas and the principles of linguistically encoding conceptualizations of events.

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