

Book Review

Wolfgang U. Dressler, F. Nihan Ketrez and Marianne Kilani-Schoch: *Nominal compound acquisition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017, pp viii+310. Paperback. £86.66 ISBN 9789027264978

Reviewed by **Xiaoxiao Zhang** and **Hongwei Zhan**: Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China; e-mail: 310639871@qq.com, hwzhan78@163.com

Previous research on morphology in first -language acquisition has addressed issues like the development of verb inflection (Bittner, Dressler and Kilani - Schoch 2003), nominal inflection (Stephany and Voeikova 2009), and others, but research on children's acquisition of compounds has been rather scarce. In this sense, this volume constitutes a complement to previous research and becomes the first book on compound acquisition.

Compounding is regarded as one powerful technique for word formation. Compounds are the output of compounding, which is defined as "the juxtaposition of two words to form a new word" (Bauer 2009) or the "grammatical combination of words, that is of lexical items or lexemes, to form new words" (Dressler 2006: 24).

This volume, edited by Wolfgang U. Dressler, F. Nihan Ketrez, and Marianne Kilani-Schoch, is a collection of language-specific studies of children's acquisition of nominal compounds. The main body includes 12 chapters, preceded by an introductory chapter and followed by a concluding chapter (Chapter 13, discussion and outlook). Longitudinal data of child speech (CS) and child directed speech (CDS) are collected in a variety of languages: German, Danish, Russian, French, Greek, Lithuanian, Estonian, Finnish, North Saami, Turkish, and Hebrew. The majority of these languages are members of the Indo-European language family.

Chapter 1 investigates German children's early development of compounds, based on the longitudinal data of three Viennese children up to 3;0 and the transversal data of 28 children at 3;0 and 3;3 (14 low, 14 high socio-economic status). The study finds that the emergence of compounds from earlier amalgams occurs side by side with the development of inflection, which is evidence for a switch from a premorphological phrase to protomorphology. This study also accounts for the rise in complexity and a blind-alley development and their evidence for morphology and acquisition theory.

Chapter 2 examines the development of compounds of Danish children (three girls and one boy). The longitudinal recordings of the CDS and CS reveal that the most frequent compounds produced by the children are transparent endocentric NN compounds, followed by VN and AN compounds, extending from prototypical compounds to more complex ones. This study also finds a gender difference. Specifically, the frequency of compound-use by boys outnumbers that of girls.

Chapter 3, on early noun compound acquisition in Russian, shows the strong influence of CDS on CS. Although compounds emerge quite early (at the beginning of the protomorphology stage) in the data of five Russian children, their frequency of use is rather low. The productive patterns of compounds found in CS, interfixed patterns ('X+VERB', later 'X+NOUN'), are independent of structural complexity, but reflect the productive sub-types in the distribution of CDS

Chapter 4 compares French-speaking children's development of strict compounds and loose compounds, i.e. multilexical units that are lexicalized sequences of words corresponding to syntactic phrases. The results show the dominance of loose compounds (i.e. multilexical units). Further differentiation is made between multilexical units with or without a preposition. The former displays selective errors, suggesting the crucial role of syntax in early development of NN sequences

Chapter 5 examines the morphological structure of Greek compound patterns in a usage-based framework. The results, obtained from the speech of two girls, show that productivity of nominal compound formation is limited. The data of CS and CDS also shows that Greek differs from other languages in that neoclassical nominal compounds are more frequent than endocentric subordinative ones, providing evidence for the effect of entrenchment rather than productivity.

Chapter 6 investigates four Lithuanian children's early production of compounds, and finds that compounds are infrequently used both in CS and CDS, which accounts for the poor productivity. The study suggests that compound formation is not dependent on frequency of types and tokens, but dependent on speech situations instead.

Chapter 7 analyses compound acquisition in Estonian via a corpus of three children. It identifies Estonian children's early emergence of compounds and their transparent and productive feature by frequent usage and innovative compounds.

Chapter 8 on Finnish conducts its study of recordings of two children by means of qualitative and quantitative analysis. It finds out that the emergence

of compounds in the children's production synchronizes with the development of inflectional morphology (protomorphological phrases). This study also shows the morphotactical and morphosemantically transparency in children's use of neologisms.

Chapter 9 focuses on the acquisition of compounds by a North Saami-speaking child. It is found that the frequency of compounds in CDS corresponds with the child's sequence of acquiring the subtypes of compounds.

Chapter 10 investigates Turkish nominal compounds based on a recording of a Turkish child. NN compounds, although less frequent than possessive compounds, nonetheless emerge earlier, because the former are simpler in structure. The author argues that structural simplicity plays a significant role in the early acquisition of Turkish compounds.

Chapter 11 describes the developmental course of Hebrew compounds by tracing children's peer talk from 2 to 8. It compares the uses and functions of two Hebrew compounding devices: bound *smixut*, and free compounds. It is found that *smixut* compounds are used to express a sub-categorization relation in the lexicon, while free compounds are used for more syntactic relations like possessive and nominal predication.

Chapter 12 takes an onomasiological approach and compares the lexical typology in German and Greek based on a sample list of German children's nominal compounds and their equivalents in Greek. The results show that the use of compounds in the two languages is associated with different preferential contexts: in German, compounds tend to be colloquial and used in less formal child-centered situations, while in Greek, compounds are used in formal written registers.

The studies in this volume cover a wide range of languages, and the cross-linguistic and typological description of compounds also contributes to the understanding of compounds in general linguistics. In this book, the findings of some studies are contradictory to others. However, it seems that the relevant chapters failed to cross-reference each other. The target readers of this volume could be researchers and scholars of language acquisition, morphology, syntax and theoretical linguistics.

References

- Bauer, L. 2009. Typology of compounds. In R. Lieber and P. Stekauer (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of compounding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bittner, D., W. Dressler and M. Kilani-Scoch. 2003. *Development of verb inflection in first language acquisition: A cross-linguistic perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dressler, W. 2006. Compound types. In G. Libben and G. Jarema (eds.), *The representation and processing of compound words*, 23–44. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Stephany, D. and M. Voeikova. 2009. *Development of nominal inflection in first language acquisition: A cross-linguistic perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.