

# The fluid nature of word formation

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This paper wants to establish a parallel between a diachronic process by which the head of a left-branching compound becomes a suffix and blends. In both cases, the function of the second element as head of the construction is preserved, however, this head has lost its former morphological independence as a member of a compound. Consequently, the borderline between compounding and derivation viz. compounding and unarticulated words becomes fuzzy.

The first part of the presentation will briefly discuss how language change may obscure the borderlines between morphological categories. The second part focuses on a synchronic analysis and discusses blending. The analysis of blends demonstrates that the border lines between distinct morphological levels cannot be drawn sharply either. The data discussed in this paper come from English, German and Dutch.

It is known that the distinction between compounding and derivation is not as clear as the handbooks claim (cf. Bauer 2005, Trips 2009, Bauer et al. 2013 and Olsen 2014). For instance, suffixes such as English *-hood* and *-dom* or German *-keit* or German and Dutch *-lich/-lijk* started as nouns or adjectives, that were frequently used in compounds. From there they developed into suffixes:

A more recent example is Dutch *-boer*, which changed from a noun meaning ‘farmer’ into an affixoid meaning ‘vendor’ (Booij 2002). It is also evident that words that started as derived forms may lose their internal structure in the course of the history, just as compounds.

Synchronic morphological analysis has shown that derived words with a non-cohering suffix behave like compounds (Booij 2019). Here it will be demonstrated that blends behave similarly. Blends form a productive category of lexemes that combine formal features of unarticulated, simplex, words and of polymorphemic complex or articulated words. Phonologically blends form a prosodic word, whereas at the same time blends behave morphologically as compounds.

The focus will be on blends of the type *brunch*, *motel* and *smog*.

- First, it will be shown that one must make a difference between clipped compounds and blends. Clipped compounds or stub compounds such as *sitcom*, combine the first parts of the two source words, whereas blends, such as *motel*, combine the left-hand part of the first source word and the right-hand part of the second source word.
- Clipped compounds appear to be compounds with a structural head, which is the right part of the clipped compound. As all Germanic compounds, clipped compounds consist of two phonological words
- Moreover, the compound stress rule applies to clipped compounds, whereas blends normally copy the stress pattern of the second source word. Blends form one phonological word.
- Blends copy the syllabic and prosodic structure of the second source word.

- However, it appears that blends also have a structural head, which is normally the part which descends from the second source word. So, in *motel* the left-hand part *-otel* is the head. (*Hotel* is the second source word.) Headedness is a feature of complex words.

Since the second source word of many blends is a simplex word, as in *brunch*, *motel* and *smog*, the resulting blend can also be described as unarticulated. However, blend formation also resembles compounding. Consequently, blends are a borderline case between simplex, unarticulated, words and compounding.

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#### Keywords:

- word formation
- fuzzy categories
- blending
- phonological word