Recursivity in polylexemic compounding from a cognitive linguistic perspective

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Huber (forthc.) has shown that there are measurable differences in the productivity of compounds, i.e. the extent to which compounds are used for the repeated formation of more complex compounds. Some compounds like *football* or *health care* are highly productive, forming a paradigm of multi-word compounds (e.g. *football game*, *football coach*, *football shoes*; *health care reform*, *health care system*, *health care provider*), while others like *body mass* or *world heritage* are only seldom encountered in more complex compounds. Furthermore, compounds show different degrees of productivity depending on whether they are used as a head or as a modifier in multi-word compounds. Speakers form, for example, considerably more complex compounds with the pattern '*football* + Noun' than with 'Noun + *football*'. The analysis of the slot-fillers used in these patterns (Huber forthc.) has shown that these nouns tend to form semantic clusters. The noun-slot in the pattern '*football* + N', for example, is commonly taken by words from the area of media coverage or agents in the frame of FOOTBALL (e.g. *football magazine*, *football scandal*, *football report*, *football movie*; *football wife*, *football man*, *football guy*, *football dad*). My talk will target the following questions: (i) How is this knowledge on the productivity of a compound cognitively available? (ii) How does a compound's mental representation influence its productivity?

I will sketch a proposal that aims to explain in what ways the use of patterns that give rise to polylexemic compounds affects the organization of the cognitive network. In line with usage-based cognitive approaches to word-formation, I will draw on the processes of entrenchment and schematization. The descriptions will deviate slightly from those found in mainstream construction grammarian approaches (e.g. Langacker 1987; Goldberg 2006), suggesting that the repeated use of linguistic elements is cognitively represented in a more dynamic way than is traditionally assumed. Based on Schmid (2020), I will argue that different degrees of productivity can be explained through more and less strongly routinized symbolic, syntagmatic and paradigmatic associations in the cognitive network. This will allow to demonstrate why more strongly entrenched compounds are more available as building blocks for polylexemic compounds. These explanations aim to deepen the understanding of the storing, processing and formation of polylexemic linguistic units.

The line of argumentation is based on a database of 57,741 triconstituent noun compounds of the English language, extracted from the COCA. This database provides the figures for measuring the productivity and entrenchment of two-word compounds. It is also used as an input for a vector-space analysis that allows depicting the semantic similarity of the slot-fillers used in exemplary patterns that give rise to triconstituent noun compounds. Figures from this database will also serve to illustrate the varying degrees to which the different kinds of associations can be assumed to be routinised.

References
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