PHRASAL COMPOUNDS AND LEXICAL INTEGRITY

KYOKO KATO and TARO KAGEYAMA
Kwansei Gakuin University*

1. Theoretical Issues

As avowed by the Lexicalist Hypothesis, a hallmark of word formation rules is that their application is limited to words and morphemes, whereby phrasal categories are generally prohibited from occurring inside complex words. However, apparent violations of this constraint have been occasionally pointed out like Charles and Di syndrome (Lieber (1992)) and oh-what-a-wicked-world-this-is-and-how-I-wish-I-could-do-something-to-make-it-better-and-nobler expression (Bauer (1983)) (see also Carroll (1979), Wiese (1996), and Jackendoff (1997)). Such “phrasal compounds,” which straddle the boundary between morphology and syntax, pose an interesting challenge to the theories of morphology, and in fact Lieber (1992) finds in them her primary motivation for reducing productive word formations to the syntactic component.

Unfortunately, the previous studies including Lieber’s mostly identify the wordhood of such complex expressions only by the “front stress” pattern specified by the Compound Stress Rule. The stress pattern, however, is notoriously unstable and cannot be taken as a reliable criterion for determining whether a complex expression is a word or a phrase. As discussed by Bates (1988), Liberman and Sproat (1992), and others, there are a great many expressions which are given the phrasal stress despite their morphological shape as compounds, and as pointed out by Sproat (1993) and Sugioka (1994), some of the examples Lieber (1992) invokes as phrasal compounds actually look like phrases rather than words.

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In this note, we will employ two syntactic tests, adjective insertion and one-substitution, to measure the lexical integrity of complex expressions. The tests reveal that among the various kinds of complex expressions that have been subsumed under the rubric of phrasal compounds, only a limited group qualifies as bona-fide compound words while the others, in particular those involving sentential modifiers, merely constitute phrases. If this demonstration is successful, Lieber's syntactic theory of compound formation will lose much ground.

2. Wordhood of Phrasal Compounds

For the purpose of exposition, we divide what have been commonly regarded as phrasal compounds into three groups. The expressions of both Type A and Type B involve phrasal categories like NP, PP, VP, and AP as their modifiers, while those of Type C include sentences. Some examples are given in (1).

Type B: wait-and-see attitude, happy-go-lucky attitude, lost-and-found column, made-for-TV program, cost-of-living index, once-upon-a-time story, government-to-government assistance, good-for-nothing man
Type C: who's the boss wink, I told you so attitude, devil-may-care attitude, I-told-you-so look, don't-be-angry-with-me look

In terms of stress patterns, these three types of complex expressions all display the left-dominant stress, although individual fluctuations may be observed.

(2) a. CHARLES and DI syndrome, READY-to-WEAR store
b. cost-of-LIVING index, WAIT-and-SEE attitude
c. who's the BOSS wink

Thus, the three types cannot be discriminated phonologically.

However, use of syntactic tests for lexical integrity (Bresnan and Mchombo (1995)) will bring to light a significant distinction among the different types. Specifically, the tests of syntactic inseparability and anaphoric islandhood show that only the expressions of Type A are qualified as genuine compounds. The data given below were checked
by five native speakers of English (American non-linguists).

### 2.1. Inseparability

If an expression is a compound word, its first member should not be separated from the second by syntactic means such as insertion of adjectives. This point is also discussed by Lieber (1992) and Liberman and Sproat (1992). We will first observe that Type A expressions generally reject adjectives inserted inside them.

(3) a. *It was a Charles and Di terrible syndrome.
   b. *It was a rag-and-bone disgusting man.
   c. *It was a ready-to-wear high-grade store.
   d. *It was an inside-the-park wonderful home run.
   e. *It was a husband-and-wife ferocious quarrel.

The ungrammaticality of (3) confirms the morphological integrity of Type A expressions. In marked contrast to (3) are the examples of Type B in (4), which allow an intervening adjective in front of their head nouns. (Some of our informants prefer a comma before the inserted adjectives.)

(4) a. It was a made-for-TV attractive program.
   b. It was a cost-of-living reliable index.
   c. Let's take a wait-and-see easygoing attitude.
   d. It was a lost-and-found informative column.
   e. It was a once-upon-a-time amusing story.

This result indicates that the expressions of Type B are phrasal, contrary to their compound stress pattern.

### 2.2. Anaphoric Island

Another feature of lexical integrity is that words constitute anaphoric islands (Postal (1969)), disallowing coreference into or out of them. Here we examine whether the head nouns of complex expressions can be replaced by the pronoun one, which is known as a substitute for N'. The examples in (5) are intended to test this possibility with Type A expressions.

(5) a. —Is it a Charles and Di syndrome or a Harry and Betty syndrome?
     —*A Charles and Di one.
   b. —Is he a rag-and-bone man or a stingy man?
     —*A rag-and-bone one.
   c. —Is it a five-and-ten-cent store or a ready-to-wear
store?
—* A ready-to-wear one.
d. —Is it an inside-the-park home run or a grand-slam home run?
—* An inside-the-park one.
e. —Is it a husband-and-wife quarrel or a lovers’ quarrel?
—* A husband-and-wife one.

Our informants generally rejected one-substitution here, though some of them commented that some of the expressions might be acceptable in casual speech. The virtual impossibility of one-substitution in (5) strongly suggests that the expressions of Type A make up anaphoric islands. This result agrees with the inseparability of Type A expressions shown in (3) above.

On the other hand, it is found that the one-anaphor can be freely substituted for the head nouns of Type B expressions in (6).

(6) a. —Is it a made-for-TV program or a mixed music-and-film program?
—A made-for-TV one.
b. —Is it a cost-of-living index or a consumer price index?
—A cost-of-living one.
c. —Did he take a wait-and-see attitude or a censorious attitude?
—A wait-and-see one.
d. —Is it a lonely-hearts column or a lost-and-found column?
—A lost-and-found one.
e. —Is it a once-upon-a-time story or a life story?
—A once-upon-a-time one.

Again, the outcome of this anaphoric island test tallies with the one drawn from the adjective insertion test in (4), demonstrating that the expressions of Type B are not real compounds.

The foregoing observations have revealed that despite their formal similarity, the expressions of Type A and Type B have different morphological/syntactic status. Only the Type A expressions, which exhibit lexical integrity, count as bona-fide compounds; the expressions of Type B must be regarded as syntactic phrases, though their compound-like stress pattern need be explained somehow.
2.3. Complex Expressions with IP and CP as Modifiers

So far we have been concerned with those complex expressions whose modifiers are made up of non-sentential phrases (NP, VP, PP, AP). Since these phrasal categories are headed by lexical categories and do not involve tense or modality, it is not very strange that some of them (i.e. Type A) get lexicalized and participate in compound formation. More problematic are the expressions of Type C, whose first members are sentential categories (IP or CP). If these expressions really make up compound words, then they will provide an effective motivation for Lieber’s enterprise of deconstructing morphology. In actual fact, however, our informants have accepted examples like (7) and (8) involving adjective insertion and one-substitution.

(7) a. a who’s the boss knowing wink
    b. an I-told-you-so boastful attitude
    c. a devil-may-care reckless attitude
    d. an I-told-you-so boastful look
    e. a don’t-be-angry-with-me frail look

(8) a. —Was it a who’s the boss wink or a sly wink?
    —A who’s the boss one.
    b. —Was it a devil-may-care attitude or an I-told-you-so attitude?
    —An I-told-you-so one. / A devil-may-care one.
    c. —Was it an I-told-you-so look or a don’t-be-angry-with-me look?
    —An I-told-you-so one. / A don’t-be-angry-with-me one.

Although our data on sentential modifiers are rather limited, as far as the two sets of results in (7) and (8) are concerned, it is reasonable to conclude that the complex expressions with IP and CP do not make up words, contrary to the common assumption held by Lieber (1992) and many other researchers.

3. Conclusion

By examining the word status of so-called phrasal compounds, this paper has pointed out that great caution is necessary in carrying out morphological research. In view of the frequent mismatches between phonological and morphological structures (Liberman and Sproat (1992), Kubozono (1995)), the traditional Compound Stress Rule must be discounted as the litmus test for determining wordhood. Instead,
we have adopted syntactic measures to find that only the expressions of Type A truly qualify as phrasal compounds while those of Type B and Type C are identified as phrases. This conclusion will considerably weaken Lieber's syntactic theory of word formation or any other view that allows morphology and syntax to intermingle freely with each other.

It remains to be seen how the differences between true compounds (Type A) and compound-like phrases (Types B and C) can be characterized. The latter two types appear to be more transparent in meaning and more active in production than Type A. In the light of Liberman and Sproat's (1992: 156) remark that some informal and journalistic styles freely allow phrasal and sentential modifiers, we may conjecture that the modifiers in Types B and C are exploited spontaneously as ad hoc adjectives in particular registers of English. For these, a reanalysis rule along the lines of Shimamura (1986) will come into play, but the reanalysis is responsible only for the modifier part (e.g. once-upon-a-time in Type B once-upon-a-time story). In order to achieve the lexical status as a compound of Type A, it will be necessary that a whole modifier-head unit (e.g. inside-the-park home run) should be established as a conventional concept in the language society. We cannot go any further here into the formidable question of how lexicalization takes place.

REFERENCES


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(Kyoko Kato)  
Graduate School  
Kwansei Gakuin University  
1-1-155 Uegahara  
Nishinomiya-shi  
Hyogo 662-8501  
e-mail: kyokok@osk3.3web.ne.jp

(Taro Kageyama)  
School of Humanities  
Kwansei Gakuin University  
1-1-155 Uegahara  
Nishinomiya-shi  
Hyogo 662-8501  
e-mail: tkage@sannet.ne.jp