

Foreword

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Within the stimulating framework of a meeting between linguists, logicians, semiologists, and experts on artificial intelligence organized by Umberto Eco in San Marino in 1990, Pier Marco Bertinetto asked me to organize a monograph for "Rivista di Linguistica". The idea of a special issue dedicated to compounds came to mind almost immediately and, in effect, we started out right away, working together for an afternoon on a topics list. This list quickly turned into a letter of invitation to contributors a copy of which is given below:

Dear Colleague,

I am planning a special issue of the "Rivista di Linguistica" directed by Piermarco Bertinetto (Pisa - Scuola Normale).

My idea would be to have several essays about compounds written by specialists of various languages.

Every essay should, in principle, discuss the following issues:

1. Basic units (words - stems - roots...)
2. Possible compounds (list of combinations of major lexical categories allowed to form a compound). Non possible compounds.
3. Position of the head
4. Endocentric/exocentric compounds
5. Inflection of compounds
6. Derivation of compounds (if possible)
- 6a. Derivation of compounds with evaluative suffixes
7. Readjustment of compounds with evaluative suffixes
8. Problems
- 8a. Distinguishing between compounds and phrases
- 8b. ...

Of course, today, this topics list should take into consideration some changes which have arisen in the theoretical picture of morphology, particularly in its relationship with syntax. I am, however, reproposing it as it provides a general guideline for reading the essays contained herein. Naturally, I did not require strict conformation to the topics list. In fact no one (not even myself) followed my topics list to the letter, as is appropriate. It must, however, be said that the overall picture adopted makes it possible to compare these contributions on a large scale.

The contributions presented here are by Becker (German), Booij (Dutch), Kiefer (Hungarian), Lieber (English), Oniga (Latin), Rainer & Varela (Spanish), Ralli (Modern Greek) Scalise (Italian), Villalva (Portuguese), Zwanenbourg (French). I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of them for having made their contribution to this special issue which, as far as I know, is the most complete overview of compounding from both the theoretical and empirical points of view. Most noteworthy, from the empirical point of view, the reader will find comparable organic lists of compounds in several languages which were not previously available. Unfortunately, not all the languages I had originally planned on have been studied here, but I am certain that this monographic issue presents an interesting collection of the hypotheses, data, and discussions on problems inherent to compounding. Perhaps it is by reading ALL the essays presented here that it becomes possible, for example, to make a list if not exhaustive at least more complete than previously available — of what can (or cannot) be considered a compound. This has been made possible by the fact that, along with the most well known forms of compounds, some more unusual forms are also presented (eg. ternary compounds, phrasal compounds, numeral compounds, particle compounds, etc.). Compounds constitute an extremely delicate area in that they are “the most syntactic morphological constructions” in grammar and, according to theory, are therefore susceptible to being treated in different ways; at times morphological and at others syntactic. The dominating point of view of this collection of essays is that compounds are morphological constructions. Nonetheless, what has also come out of this work is the fact that the morphological theories of the 1970s and 1980s — requiring linearly ordered morphological components — no longer hold up when considering recent data.

I do hope that this monograph of “*Rivista di Linguistica*” can serve as a point of reference for the study of both compounds and, more generally, the relationship between morphology and syntax.