

# Structural, functional and cognitive aspects of adjective-noun combinations

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The paper discusses the interplay of structural, functional and cognitive aspects of adjective-noun (AN) combinations in German, French and English.

**Structural basis:** We can clearly distinguish compounds and phrases by means of inflectional agreement in German and French (cf. *Großmutter* vs. *große Mutter*, *grand-mère* vs. *grande mère*). Although this is not possible in English, stress might play a crucial role and has to be investigated further<sup>1</sup>.

**Functional basis:** German has a strong tendency to use compounds as naming (e.g. *Rotfuchs*) and phrases as descriptive units (e.g. *blauer Schuh*) (Bücking 2009, 2010; Hüning 2010). In contrast, French favors phrases for both the naming (e.g. *poudre noire*) and descriptive function (e.g. *table blanche*) (Van Goethem 2009). Finally, English AN combinations typically have initial stress if they function as naming units (e.g. *BLACKbird*) but non-initial stress if they describe phenomena (e.g. *black BIRD*).

**Cognitive basis:** Recent evidence (Kotowski et al. 2014) suggests that compounds show a memorization advantage in comparison to phrases in German. I will report on two new studies that investigated the memorization of AN combinations in the aforementioned languages. I found memorization advantages of novel German compounds (e.g. *Jungtourist*) compared to French phrases (e.g. *jeune touriste*). Also, my analyses revealed a memorization advantage of English combinations with initial stress over combinations with non-initial stress if the former were semantically non-compositional (e.g. *SLOW pen*) and the latter compositional (e.g. *short BRUSH*). I will interpret the results with respect to the structural-functional separation between compounds and phrases.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Although stress has been extensively studied for NN combinations in English (e.g. Arndt-Lappe 2011; Bell & Plag 2012, 2013; Giegerich 2004, 2005; Plag et al. 2007, 2008), the amount of research on AN combinations is still quite low (e.g. Vogel & Raimy 2002).

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