

Hyphenated Compound Nouns in English and Albanian		Linguistics
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Esmeralda Sherko, MA	English Department. Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania.
Arjan Shumeli, PhD	English Department. Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania
Luljeta Mine, PhD	English Department. Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze compounds in both English and Albanian. It should be pointed out that the spelling of English compounds often exposes English students, including native speakers of the language, to difficulties as to their correct usage, since it is just as normal for them to consult a dictionary when faced with ambiguities concerning their form. Dictionaries, however, often provide different forms, where the same word might be written differently across different dictionaries. The spelling of compounds falls under three basic categories: open, solid (closed) and hyphenated compounds. On the other hand, in Albanian most of the compounds are written as just one word. Only a few of them are hyphenated and yet there is a third category of nouns which are written as two separate words. Most of the latter ones include nouns related to zoology or botany. The paper will present statistical data on hyphenated compound nouns in both languages. It will also provide examples of compound nouns collected from dictionaries of both languages.

1. Introduction to compounding

In linguistics compounding refers to the formation of new lexical units by combining one or more than one words. Compounds exist in most of the world languages. English and Albanian both have compound words in their lexis. It is one of the most productive ways of word formation in both above mentioned languages.

2. Compounding in English

A compound is a lexical unit consisting of more than one base¹. Compounds have been present in the English language ever since the first written documents exist, since the Anglo - Saxon period up to the present days as one of the most prolific word formation techniques. The English language has gone through three epochs of development²: *Old English* (449-1066), *Middle English* (1066 – 1476) and *Modern English* (1476-), which is further subdivided into Early Modern English (1476 – 1776) and Modern English from 1766 up to our days.

The first period was influenced by the Anglo – Saxons with words loaned by Old Norse. The epic poem, *Beowulf*³, is a vivid illustration of the existence of compounds in OE. Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (867 A.D), another document from OE testifies for the existence of the so-called *poetic*⁴ compounds in those times.

The second period (*Middle English* 1066 – 1476) is under the influence of French and Scandinavian languages because of the Norman Conquest (1066). Word formation was characterized by the presence of affixes. In *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer there are compound nouns (*gentleman, cheesecake, nightmare, paintbrush*), compounding formed by noun + verb was coined during this period, e.g. *sunshine*); compound adjectives (*threadbare, bloodred, everyday*); compound verbs (*outline, uphold, overheat, overload*) etc. It was exactly during this period that compounds were first classified as endocentric and exocentric.

¹ Quirk et al. “A comprehensive grammar of the English language, Longman”, p. 1567.

² From now on we will refer to them as follows: OE, ME, PME.

³ “Beowulf” begins with “*Gar-Dena*, a compound word, which means “Spear-Danes”.

⁴ E-Introduction to Old English -14. Poetic style (online version).

The third period brought about considerable transformations on account of vocabulary expansion. Part of the Modern Period of English language was also Shakespeare, whose influence on the standardization and modernization of the English language is not only quantitative, but also qualitative. Shakespeare's famous sonnets are rich in compound adjectives: *well-tuned sounds* (VIII⁵), *first-born flowers*, *well-greased bearings* (XXI⁶) etc. Nowadays the trend of enriching the vocabulary through compounding goes on in order to meet the needs of the latest scientific, economic, social and global developments. As per Bauer and Huddleston (2002, 1647) noun + noun compounds are the most productive compounds in English.

Classification of compounds based on their semantics yields four types, categorized as follows: *endocentric*, *exocentric*, *copulative* and *appositional*. As far as spelling is concerned English compounds fall under three basic categories: open, solid (closed) and hyphenated.

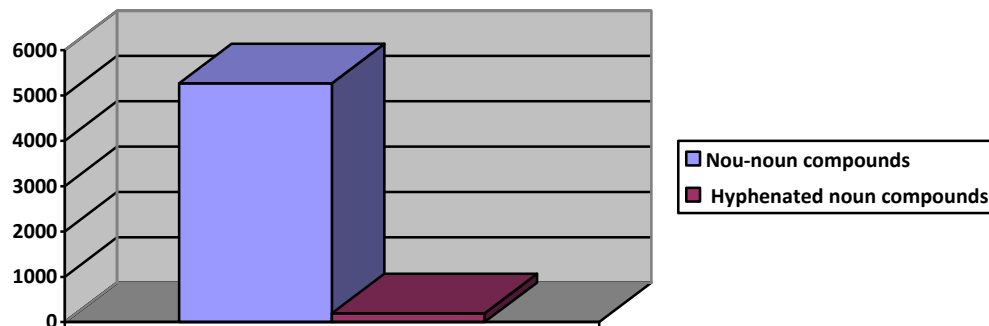
- a) **Open**, e.g., toy store, diving board, flower pot, seeding machine, spring tine.
- b) **Hyphenated** (-); e.g., flower-pot, air-brake, she-pony, beater-drum, wire-baler.
- c) **Solid**, e.g., flowerpot, washrooms, pickpocket, wheelhouse, sledgehammer, horsepower, woodwork.

One of the specific peculiarities of the English language dealing with compounds is related to spelling. It is considered to be one of the most troublesome issues as not only English people themselves often look words up in the dictionary, but different dictionaries suggest different forms of writing. However the preference lies on the lexicographical rules and the used variant. Quirk suggests that hyphenation is more common in British than in American English. Whereas Bauer⁷ suggests a diachronic progress towards solid spelling based on "recurrence and age of compounds" as some compounds are written separately (e.g. *college degree*) while other new ones (e.g. *airside* from *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words*) are written as one solid word.

3. Hyphenated noun- noun compounds

The corpus of LDCE⁸ contains 5270⁹ noun – noun compounds, 194 of which are hyphenated, respectively 3.68%.

Graphically the above data are presented as follows:



Some examples include: *air-hostess*, *baby-minder*, *blotting-paper*, *feeding-bottle*, *meeting-house*, *piggy-bank*, *stepping-stone*, *brigadier-general*, *fender-bender*, *decision-making*, *owner-occupier*, *stretcher-bearer*, *wheeler-*

⁵ & ⁶number of the sonnet

⁷ Bauer Laurie, "English language and linguistics", 1998, p.69.

⁸ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2000.

⁹ <http://www.sdass.edu.si/Elope/PDF/ElopeVol7Rakic.pdf>

dealer, washer-drier, mischief-maker, part-exchange, radio-telephone, cut-throat razor, safety –deposit box, singer-songwriter, roll-top desk, singer-songwriter, air-chamber mixing, single-chain bar, well-head, etc.

4. Compounding in Albanian

Compounding is considered to be one of the most productive ways of word formation in Albanian. Compound words have been documented even in the old works of Buzuku, Budi, Bardhi, etc, but the lack of deep studies often led to contradictory conclusions. However the existence of compound words in Albanian is to be found even in toponymy. Compounding in Albanian went through two stages. *The first period* (which went on up to the twentieth century) is characterized by incomplete studies, which were often disregarded or studied superficially. *The second period* is characterized by complete studies and definitions. Kostallari¹⁰ presented a thorough comprehensive definition, which categorized compound words in Albanian as “*words formed by the agglutination of two or more words into a single lexical-semantic unit and is structurally closed*”.

5. Hyphenated noun- noun compounds

Noun- noun compounds include the following formations:

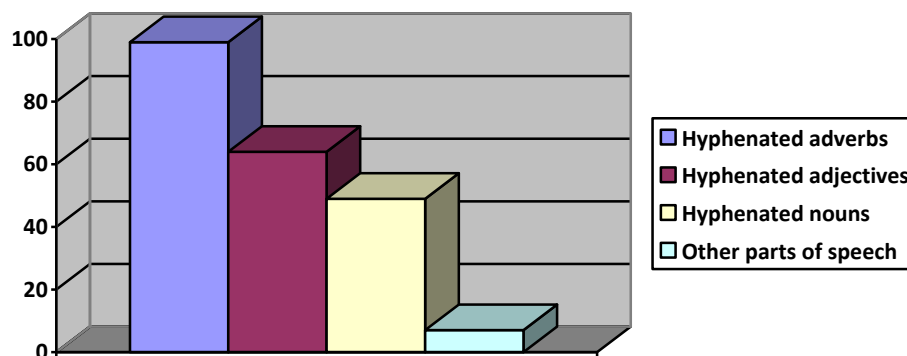
- **noun + verbal noun** (*libralidhës*) generally denoting professions.
- **noun + verbal noun** with the suffixes **-je** or **-im** (*frymëmarrje (marr frymë)*).
- **noun + noun** (*hekurudhë*)
- **appositional compounds** (*dhomë - muze, qytet-muze, shtëpi – muze*).

Compounds in Albanian are written also in the three different ways as suggested in English. However there are rules which were imposed by the *Congress of Orthography for the Albanian language* in 1972.

6. Hyphenated words in the Dictionary of Albanian Language

After collecting all the hyphenated words from the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language (1980) we achieved the following results. All in all there are 216 hyphenated words, which is about 0.5 % of the entire corpus. These words fall into the following grammatical categories: 49 nouns, 99 adverbs, 64 adjectives, 5 indefinite pronouns, 2 onomatopoeic words.

Graphically the above data are presented as follows:

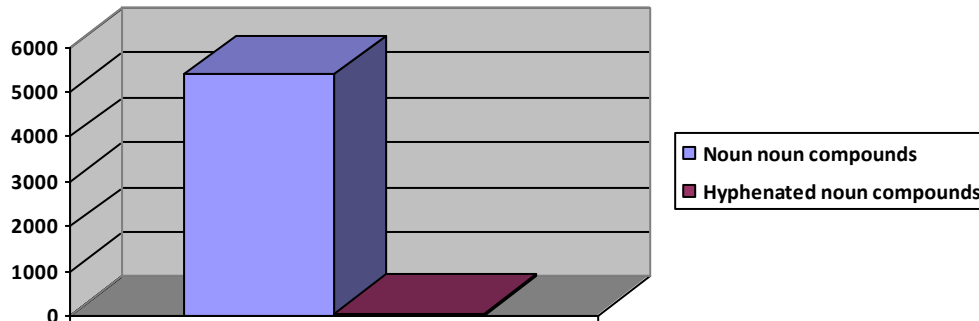


Distribution of hyphenated words as per part of speech

¹⁰ “Studime mbi leksikon dhe mbi formimin e fjalëve në gjuhën shqipe”, Tiranë 1972 –A. Kostallari pp. 77-90.

7. Hyphenated Nouns in the Dictionary of Albanian Language

The Dictionary of Albanian Language contains 5394 compound nouns, 49 of which are hyphenated, respectively 0.9 % of all compound nouns in the dictionary.



Correlation between noun-noun compounds and hyphenated noun compounds

Examples of compound nouns from the Albanian dictionary: *asfalt-beton*, *bar-bufe*, *divan-krevat*, *bar-kafe*, *dyqan-shtëpi*, *bar-lulishte*, *besa-besë*, *cingra-mingra*, *çikla-mikla*, *kalë-fuqi*, *monarko-fashist*, *dhomë-muze*, *peshk-kavall*, *kilovat-orë*, *postë-telegraf*, *shtëpi-muze*, *vajtje-ardhje*, *vinç-kullë etj.*

8. Conclusions

Obviously after having compared the corpus of compound nouns in English and Albanian we drew the following conclusions:

- Compounding in both languages is one of the most productive ways of word formation.
- Spelling rules coincide in both languages, but while in English writing is sometimes relative, in Albanian there are rules for this.
- Hyphenation seems to be more recurrent in English than in Albanian as there are 194 hyphenated nouns in the English dictionary as opposed to only 49 nouns in the Albanian one.
- Translation of compounds from one language into the other does not always coincide with compounds.

References

1. "Beowulf" begins with "Gar-Dena, a compound word, which means "Spear-Danes"
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5. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 2000
6. Quirk et al. "A comprehensive grammar of the English language, Longman".
7. Shakespeare' sonnets (VIII) & (XXI)
8. Studime mbi leksikun dhe mbi formimin e fjalëve në gjuhën shqipe", Tiranë 1972.