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THE UNDERLYING STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH NOMINAL COMPOUNDS WITHOUT A VERBAL ELEMENT AND THEIR SERBIAN TRANSLATION EQUIVALENTS¹

ABSTRACT: The paper presents the most significant results of a broader corpus-based research of English nominal compounds without a verbal element and their Serbian translation equivalents. Considering the underlying clausal nature of compound lexemes as well as the low productivity of compounding in Serbian, the goal of the research is twofold: firstly, to explore the linguistic means employed in the translation of English verbless nominal compounds into Serbian; and secondly, to examine if there is a relation between the underlying structures of the English compounds in question and their Serbian translation patterns. In addition to the fact that Serbian translation equivalents primarily correspond to noun phrases with different types of modification, the results of the research also point to a considerable correspondence between the underlying structures of the analyzed English compounds and surface realizations of their Serbian equivalents.

Key words: compounding, nominal compound without a verbal element, underlying structure, translation equivalent.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that they belong to the field of lexicology, compounds are often perceived as syntactic atoms, lexemes with underlying structures, which can be transformed into clauses conveying different semantic relations between the elements (Lees 1963; Marchand 1969; Levi 1978; Warren 1978; Quirk et al. 1985). Thus, while the compound *sunlight* can be transformed into <The sun [produces] light>, the underlying structure of *fanlight* is <The light [is like] a fan>, whereas the compound *wall light* can be reconstructed from <The light [is on] the wall>. Besides the polysemous nature of the head *light*, the compounds in question also differ with respect to the syntactic and semantic relations between the component

¹ The paper originates from the seminar paper entitled “English nominal compounds without a verbal element and their Serbian equivalents” which was written during the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad under the supervision of prof. dr Tvrtko Prčić. It was subsequently presented and published in the form of an abstract at the 23rd Conference on British and American Studies held in Timișoara, Romania, 16-18 May 2013.

bases. The underlying structure of *sunlight* is ‘subject + verb + object’, whereas in the case of *fanlight* and *wall light*, the modifiers of the compounds function as complements of the underlying prepositions and their underlying structures can therefore be represented as ‘subject + verb + prepositional phrase (PP) complement’. Considering the semantic features, the meanings of the underlying predicates point to the process of creation implied in the compound *sunlight*, the process of comparing or the state of resembling in the compound *fanlight*, whereas the relation between the elements of the compound *wall light* is clearly spatial in nature.

The majority of English compounds are nouns (Bauer 1983: 202). This is especially the case with binominal endocentric compounds without a verbal element, which are considered as the most productive type of word-formation in English (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1647). In contrast to English, the process of compounding is not particularly productive in Serbian, which is the situation observed in Slavic languages in general (Klajn 2002: 15; Babić 1986: 319).² Accordingly, Serbian translation equivalents of English verbless nominal compounds involve the use of other linguistic means which are either syntactic or morphological in nature.

Considering a wide range of predicates underlying English nominal compounds without a verbal element as well as the variety of their translation patterns in Serbian, the paper aims at: (a) analyzing possible translation patterns characterizing Serbian equivalents of the English compounds in question and (b) examining if there is a relation between the underlying structures of the analyzed English compounds and surface realizations of their Serbian equivalents.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The results of the research are based on the analysis of the corpus of 150 English (L1) compounds and the corresponding Serbian (L2) equivalents taken from the novel *Atonement* by Ian McEwan and its official Serbian translation *Iskupljenje* (translated by Arijana Božović) respectively. In order to focus on the most significant tendencies, the paper presents only the most illustrative examples from the corpus.³ The English compounds are provided together with their

² This observation does not apply to the binominal compounds without a linking vowel whose productivity has been on constant increase in recent years due to the literal translation of the corresponding lexemes from the English language (Prčić 2005: 177).

³ Although it is possible to argue that the lexical entries which do not have the primary stress on the first base are not true compounds but binominal syntactic structures, they were included in the research due to the rather disputable reliability of the phonological criterion. The well-known sets of compounds *Madison Street* and *apple cake* in contrast to *Madison Avenue* and *apple pie* illustrate the point (Lees 1963: 120). At the same time, the pronunciation of a given compound may significantly vary both with respect to the speaker and dialect, i.e. British English vs. American English (see Matthews 1991: 98), which further supports the unreliable nature of the phonological criterion.

underlying structures and the corresponding Serbian equivalents are followed by glosses. However, considering that some translation equivalents were rather marked due to the information structuring of the discourse as well as for stylistic reasons, the equivalents in question were re-examined by four language instructors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. They were asked to provide the most neutral Serbian equivalents for the selected English compounds and only those with the highest frequency are presented in the paper. Finally, although the sets of underlying structures were developed by a number of authors (Levi 1978; Warren 1978; Quirk et al. 1985), none of them appeared to be exhaustive, which is the reason why the classification used in this paper represents the combination of a number of well-known classifications. The basis for the analysis was taken from Quirk et al. (1985) and then it was expanded by a few adverbial meanings given by Levi (1978) and Warren (1978) as well as by other semantic relations found in the corpus itself.

3. CORPUS ANALYSIS

Regarding the concept of syntactic structure underlying compound lexemes, English nominal compounds without a verbal element are classified into two types: (a) 'subject + verb + object' and (b) 'subject + verb + complement'. The first type is observed in the case of compounds whose underlying predicate is a transitive verb. Accordingly, one component base functions as the subject and the other one is the direct object (e.g. *sunlight*<The sun [produces] light>). The second type is typical of compounds whose underlying predicates are mainly linking verbs. As a result, one base is the subject, whereas the other can be either a subject complement (e.g. *oak tree*<The tree [is] the oak>) or the complement of the underlying preposition (e.g. *fanlight*<The light [is like] a fan>). The two types of underlying syntactic structures are further classified according to the underlying predicates which reflect the semantic relations between the component bases.

3.1. Underlying type 'subject + verb + object'

This pattern is observed with underlying predicates expressing creation, possession, use and containment.

Although the meaning of creation always involves the underlying predicate [produce], it is possible to distinguish between two subtypes of the compounds in question. The first subtype represents prototypical creation in which the referent of the first base directly produces what is denoted by the second base, as in the compounds *spider web*<the spider [produces] the web>: *PAUKOVA MREŽA* (spider.Adj web), *stomach acid*<the stomach [produces] acid>: *ŽELUDAČNA KISELINA* (stomach.Adj acid), or *sunlight* <the sun [produces] light>: *SUNČEVA SVETLOST* (sun.Adj light). If the referent of the first base produces what is denoted by the second base indirectly, i.e. under some external influence, it is more appropriate

to talk about causative creation, as in *bomb crater* <the bomb [produces] the crater>: *KRATER OD BOMBE* (crater by bomb.Gen), *bullet hole* <the bullet [produces] the hole>: *RUPA OD METKA* (hole by bullet.Gen), or *wine stain* <the wine [produces] the stain>: *FLEKA OD VINA* (stain by wine.Gen). Equally importantly, the two subtypes of creation result in different translation patterns in Serbian. The compounds involving prototypical creation correspond to noun phrases (NPs) with adjectival premodification, whereas causative meanings tend to be expressed by causative genitive assigned by the preposition *od* ('by') within PP postmodification.

Similarly to the compounds involving creation, the compounds whose underlying predicates express possession include two subtypes. Considering the first subtype, the referent denoted by the first base inherently possesses what is denoted by the second base, as it can be observed in the compounds *cabbage leaf* <the cabbage [has] leaves>: *LIST KUPUSA* (leaf cabbage.Gen), *knife handle* <the knife [has] the handle>: *DRŠKA NOŽA* (handle knife.Gen), or *rose petal* <the rose [has] petals>: *LATICA RUŽE* (petal rose.Gen). In other words, the referent of the first base does not exist without the referent of the second base. The second subtype exhibits the reverse order of the possessor and the possessum. Thus, it is the referent of the second base that possesses the referent of the first base, as in *cameo brooch* <the brooch [has] the cameo>: *BROŠ S KAMEJOM* (brooch with cameo.Ins), *canopy bed* <the bed [has] the canopy>: *KREVET S BALDAHINOM* (bed with canopy.Ins), or *clock tower* <the tower [has] the clock>: *KULA SA SATOM* (tower with clock.Ins). In addition, the possessum is not the inherent part of the possessor. It represents the additional quality contributing to the meaning of the whole. The ordering of the possessor and the possessum is also reflected in the communicative dynamism of the compounds in question. Due to the fact that the focus of a clause or sentence tends to be placed in the end, which is commonly referred to as 'end-focus principle' (Halliday 1967; Greenbaum & Quirk 1990; Halupka-Rešetar 2008), the last constituent of the underlying structure of a compound is likely to become its modifier, i.e. the element which introduces new information, which is the tendency referred to as 'front-focus principle' (Radić 2005; Radić-Bojanić & Halupka-Rešetar 2012). Considering the compounds whose underlying predicates indicate possession, it can be observed that the first subtype does not adhere to the front-focus principle, while the compounds of the second subtype do. Equally importantly, the distinction between them is consistently reflected in the corresponding Serbian equivalents. The majority of the compounds of the first subtype correspond to NPs whose heads are postmodified by possessive genitive. As for the second subtype, NP heads are consistently postmodified by PPs with the preposition *s(a)* ('with') assigning the instrumental case to the complement.

If the meaning of the underlying predicate is use, the referent of the second base uses what is denoted by the first base in order to operate. However, in contrast to the meanings of creation and possession, the corresponding Serbian equivalents do not exhibit any specific translation pattern. They may be realized by NPs with adjectival premodification, NPs with PP postmodification, or by

suffixations, as in *air rifle* <the rifle [uses] (compressed) air>: *VAZDUŠNA PUŠKA* (air.Adj rifle), *wood stove* <the stove [uses] wood>: *PEĆ NA DRVA* (stove on wood.Acc) and *oil lamp* <the lamp [uses] oil>: *PETROL.-EJKA* (oil.Base+eJka.Suffix).

Finally, the meaning of containment implies that the referent of the first base represents the contents of what is denoted by the second base. As for the Serbian translation equivalents, there is a strong tendency towards partitive genitive within NP postmodification, as in *matchbox* <the box [contains] matches>: *KUTIJA ŠIBICA* (box matches.Gen), *poetry book* <the book [contains] poetry>: *KNJIGA POEZIJE* (book poetry.Gen), or *teabag* <the bag [contains] tea>: *KESICA ČAJA* (bag tea.Gen).

3.2. Underlying type 'subject + verb + complement'

The compounds with the underlying structure 'subject + verb + complement' include a wide range of semantic types. The semantic relations found in the corpus include attributive and appositive meanings as well as the meanings of resemblance, occupation, membership, material/ingredient, time, location, purpose, source/origin and topic.

If the component bases have the functions of subject and subject complement, the compounds of this underlying type are either attributive or appositive in nature. In the former case, the first base is adjectival and the compounds are endocentric. In the latter, both component bases are nominal and the compounds are appositional. The majority of attributive compounds correspond to simple lexemes in Serbian, such as *blackberry* <the berry [is] black>: *KUPINA*, *blackbird* <the bird [is] black>: *KOS*, or *Frenchman* <the man [is] French>: *FRANCUZ*. Due to the fact that the predictable meanings are often either lost or overshadowed by new meanings, the compounds of this type commonly represent decrements, which can account for the dominance of simple lexemes among their Serbian translation equivalents, i.e. the compounds *blackberry* and *blackbird* represent the species and they are not necessarily black. Simple lexemes are also observed as translation equivalents of appositional compounds, such as *comedy show* <the show [is] the comedy>: *KOMEDIJA*, *cumulus cloud* <the cloud [is] the cumulus>: *KUMULUS*, *mimeograph machine* <the machine [is] the mimeograph>: *MIMEOGRAF*, or *oak tree* <the tree [is] the oak>: *HRAST*. However, in this case, the presence of simple lexemes in Serbian is not related to idiomaticity, but rather the semantic contribution of the second base to the meaning of the first base in a compound as a whole. Namely, the compounds in question exhibit two distinct types of behavior. In the compounds *oak tree* and *comedy show*, the second base can be perceived as a means of delimiting the number of possible meanings denoted by the first base. Thus, while the word *oak* can denote both a tree and the wood of it, the compound *oak tree* denotes the tree only. Similarly, *comedy* can be any kind of spoken or written form of entertainment intended to make people laugh, whereas *comedy show* has to be performed for public. Although inconsistently, the

distinction can also be observed in Serbian, e.g. *oak*: *HRAST* ('oak tree') or *HRASTOVINA* ('wood of oak') as opposed to *oak tree*: *HRAST*. However, in the compounds *cumulus cloud* and *mimeograph machine*, the second base is semantically contained in the first base, thus lacking a delimiting function. Consequently, it can be omitted without any change in meaning, which is the reason why the corresponding Serbian equivalents involve the translation of the first base only.

If the meaning is resemblance, the referent of the second base resembles what is denoted by the first base in its form, as in *fanlight* <the light [is like] a fan>: *LEPEZASTI PROZOR* (fan.Adj light), *strawberry mark* <the mark [is like] a strawberry>: *JAGODIČASTI BELEG* (strawberry.Adj mark), or *zebra pattern* <the pattern [is like] (the skin of) a zebra>: *ZEBRASTI DEZEN* (zebra.Adj pattern). Accordingly, Serbian translation equivalents contain adjectives with the suffix *-ast* whose basic meaning is resemblance (Klajn 2003: 273).

The meaning of occupation implies that the referent of the first base denotes a place, field, means, instrument, etc. in connection with which the referent of the second base works, as it can be observed in the compounds *boatman* <the man [works in connection with] the boat>: *LAD.-AR*, *milkman* <the man [works in connection with] milk>: *MLEK.-ADŽIJA*, or *sportsman* <the man [works in connection with] sport>: *SPORT.-ISTA*. In compounds which involve the meaning of membership, the referent of the second base is naturally a member of what is denoted by the first base, as in *artillery man* <the man [is the member of] the artillery>: *ARTILJER.-AC*, *infantryman* <the man [is the member of] the infantry>: *PEŠADIN.-AC*, or *policeman* <the man [is the member of] the police>: *POLICAJ.-AC*. However, in both cases, the Serbian translation equivalents are suffixations whose suffixes denote either occupation or membership. The suffixes *-ar*, *-adžija* and *-ist(a)* commonly denote occupation, whereas the suffix *-(a)c* most often denotes membership (Klajn 2003).

The semantic type entitled material/ingredient comprises the compounds in which the referent of the first base denotes the material or the main ingredient of what is denoted by the second base. Apart from the lexeme *KROMPIR-SALATA* (potato.Mod salad.Head) which has the same surface and underlying structure as its English equivalent (English *potato salad* <the salad [is of] potatoes>) and represents a rare instance of compounding or, more precisely, semi-compounding, i.e. compounding without a linking vowel, in the entire Serbian corpus, the majority of Serbian translation equivalents are NPs with adjectival premodification, as it can be observed in the examples such as *canvas chair* <the chair [is of] canvas>: *PLATNENA STOLICA* (canvas.Adj chair), *fruit salad* <the salad [is of] fruit>: *VOČNA SALATA* (fruit.Adj salad), or *paper bag* <the bag [is of] paper>: *PAPIRNA KESA* (paper.Adj bag). Only a number of them involve PP postmodification with the preposition *od* ('of') assigning genitive case to its complement. In such cases, the surface realizations of Serbian equivalents reflect the underlying structure of the corresponding English compounds, as it can be seen in the examples such as *pine*

table <the table [is of] pine>: *STO OD BOROVINE* (table of pine.Gen) or *tweed coat* <the coat [is of] tweed>: *SAKO OD TVIDA* (coat of tweed.Gen).

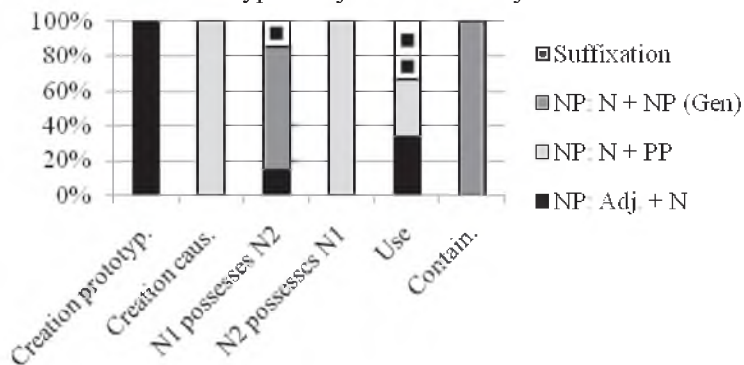
The dominance of NPs with adjectival premodification is also observed in the case of compounds whose underlying predicates denote temporal relations, such as *April rain* <the rain [is in] April>: *APRILSKA KIŠA* (April.Adj rain), *Christmas morning* <the morning [is at] Christmas>: *BOŽIĆNO JUTRO* (Christmas.Adj morning), or *summer dusk* <the dusk [is in] summer>: *LETNJI SUTON* (summer.Adj dusk). On the other hand, the mapping of the underlying structure of the English compounds is rather common if the underlying predicates denote location, purpose, source/origin and topic. Accordingly, Serbian translation equivalents of the compounds in question are often NPs with PP postmodification. According to the analysis, Serbian typically makes use of the prepositions *u* ('in') and *na* ('on') to denote location, as in *garret room* <the room [is in] the garret>: *SOBA U POTKROVLJU* (room in garret.Loc) or *shirt pocket* <the pocket [is on] the shirt>: *DŽEP NA KOŠULJI* (pocket on shirt.Loc) respectively, the prepositions *za* ('for') to denote purpose, as in *bird cage* <the cage [is for] birds>: *KAVEZ ZA PTICE* (cage for birds.Acc), the preposition *iz* ('from') to denote source/origin, as in *childhood friend* <the friend [is from] childhood>: *DRUG IZ DETINJSTVA* (friend from childhood.Gen), whereas the preposition *o* ('about') typically denotes topic, as in *pottery book* <the book [is about] pottery>: *KNJIGA O GRNČARSTVU* (book about pottery.Loc). However, in addition to NPs with PP postmodification, the aforementioned semantic types commonly correspond to NPs with adjectival premodification, as in *forest fire* <the fire [is in] the forest>: *ŠUMSKI POŽAR* (forest.Adj fire), *evening gown* <the gown [is for] the evening>: *VEČERNJA HALJINA* (evening.Adj gown), *sea water* <the water [is from] the sea>: *MORSKA VODA* (sea.Adj water), or *property law* <the law [is about] property>: *IMOVINSKO PRAVO* (property.Adj law).

4. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Considering the compounds of the type 'subject + verb + object', the vast majority of Serbian translation equivalents are realized by NPs with different types of modification (Chart 1). The NPs with PP postmodification are primarily observed in the case of the compounds whose underlying structures have causative and possessive meanings with the referent of the second base possessing the referent of the first base. In the former case, Serbian makes use of causative genitive preceded by the preposition *od* ('by'), whereas in the latter, the preposition *s(a)* ('with') assigns the instrumental case to its complement. The NPs with nominal postmodification are typical of the compounds whose underlying predicates denote containment and possession with the referent of the first base possessing the referent of the second base. In such cases, Serbian makes use of partitive and possessive genitive respectively. Finally, the NPs with adjectival premodification are most often observed in the case of prototypical creation, whereas suffixations

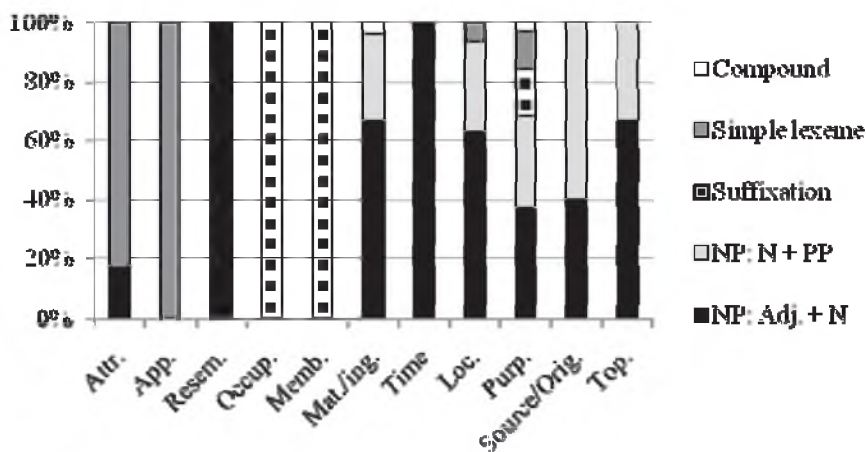
commonly represent exceptions and cannot be systemically related to any specific underlying predicate.

Chart 1: Serbian translation equivalents of the English compounds of the underlying type 'subject + verb + object'



As for the compounds of the type 'subject + verb + complement', the vast majority of Serbian equivalents are realized by NPs with adjectival premodification (Chart 2). High prominence is also observed in the case of NPs with PP postmodification, which reflect the underlying structures of the corresponding English compounds. Accordingly, the preposition *od* ('of') corresponds to the compounds whose first base denotes the material/ingredient of which the whole is made, the prepositions *u* ('in') and *na* ('on') denote location, the preposition *o* ('about') denotes topic, whereas the prepositions *za* ('for') and *iz* ('from') denote purpose and source/origin respectively. Suffixations most often correspond to the compounds belonging to the semantic types of either occupation or membership, whereas simple lexemes are typically observed in the case of attributive compounds involving the process of decrementation and compounds which are appositive in nature. Finally, the instances of compounding, or rather semi-compounding, were found in approximately 1% of the analyzed corpus, which was largely expected considering the rather low productivity of this word-formation process in Serbian.

Chart 2: Serbian translation equivalents of the English compounds of the underlying type 'subject + verb + complement'



5. CONCLUSION

Due to the fact that the process of compounding is not particularly productive in Serbian, Serbian translation equivalents of English nominal compounds without a verbal element involve the use of other linguistic means which are primarily syntactic in nature, i.e. NPs with different types of modification. What is equally important, the analyzed language material points to the correspondence between the underlying structures of the English compounds and surface realizations of their Serbian equivalents. Although this correspondence is not absolutely consistent, the presence of a number of general tendencies cannot be questioned. This only further supports the idea that, beneath the surface, compound lexemes are indeed clauses whose structures shine through in particular ways in the languages where compounding is not highly productive.

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LA STRUCTURE PROFONDE DE COMPOSÉS NOMINAUX ANGLAIS SANS UN ÉLÉMENT VERBAL ET LEURS ÉQUIVALENTS EN SERBE

Résumé

Le document présente les résultats les plus significatifs d'une étude d'un corpus plus large de composés nominaux anglais sans un élément verbal et de leurs équivalents en serbe. Tenant compte de la profonde nature clausale des lexèmes ainsi que la faible productivité de l'accord en serbe, le document a deux objectifs: le premier, d'étudier les moyens linguistiques utilisés dans la traduction de composés nominaux anglais sans un élément verbal en serbe; et le second, d'examiner s'il existe un lien entre les structures profondes des composés nommés ci-dessus et de leurs modes de traduction en serbe. Bien que les équivalents de traduction en serbe peuvent être de lexèmes simples, des suffixations, et même des composés, l'analyse montre l'emploi dominant de ressources syntaxiques en impliquant des syntagmes nominaux avec différents types de modifications. Ce qui est également important, une importante correspondance entre la structure profonde des composés anglais analysés et leurs équivalents en serbe a été remarquée dans la grande partie du corpus, ce qui confirme davantage l'idée que les lexèmes composés sont en effet des clauses.

Mots clés: composition, composé nominal sans un élément verbal, la structure profonde, les équivalents de traduction.