

Comparative Study of Compound Nouns in Persian and English

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Abstract: The present study aims to give a descriptive account of Persian and English compound nouns. Compounding is a common and frequent process for enlarging the vocabulary of all languages. This article will attempt to compare Persian and English compound nouns semantically, phonologically, and syntactically. Some issues relating to the headedness and stress pattern in compounds will be discussed. It seems some differences exist between English and Persian compound nouns.

Keywords: Compound Nouns, Headedness, Stress

Introduction

As Keshavarz (2011) points, contrastive analysis is the systematic study of a pair of languages in order to identify their structural differences and similarities, usually for translation and teaching purposes (p. 4). Behaviorist psychologist along with structural linguists believed that native language habits which are acquired during childhood interfere with the acquisition of second language habits which are usually quite different from the habits of the mother tongue. Thus CA is found on the assumption that second or foreign language learners will tend to transfer to their L₂ utterances the formal features of their L₁ (Keshavarz, 2011, p. 7).

So this study aims to compare compound nouns in Persian and English in order to investigate structural differences and similarities and to identify interlingual and intralingual errors coming from first language and target language respectively that are made by Persian learners.

As Yule (2007) states, there is a joining of two separate words to produce a single form, this combining process technically known as compounding (p. 54). This productive process is a kind of word-formation processes. According to Framkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2007), two or more words maybe joined to form new compound words, the kinds of combinations that occur in English are nearly limitless, compounding is a common and frequent process for enlarging the vocabulary of all languages, all languages have rules for conjoining words to form compound, English compounds are variously spelled with dashes, spaces or nothing

between the individual words. (pp. 93-95). Compounding also occurs in Persian, It implies universality of compounding.

As Yule (1996) asserts, new words and meanings are constantly being added to the lexical repertoire of all human languages. A number of word formation processes are incessantly at work to proliferate the lexicon of languages to help account for new ideas. Concepts and objects and their socio-cultural functions. Compounding is one these processes which can be broadly defined as the conjoining of two or more lexical items to create new words. Fromkin and Rodman (1988) suggest that "compounding is a common and frequent process for enlarging the vocabulary of all languages" (P. 136). Transformational-generative theory of linguistics proposed by Chomsky (1965) offers a framework for word formation processes whereby words are created by the combination of free and bound morphemes. For example, the bound morpheme "un" can be combined with 'tie' to produce unite as a verb. This is the process of inflection which must be distinguished from compounding because in compounding, two free morphemes are joined to form a new one (e.g. market + place= marketplace) while in reflection, a bound morpheme is attached to a free morpheme to serve a new semantic or syntactic function (e.g. adjective + y= adverb, as in physical + ly= physically).

There have been numerous studies on compound words in English especially compound verbs, but very little has been done on compound nouns and comparison of them in two languages. As we know

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predicting and diagnosing the learner's errors are very essential to teaching second language, most of the learners make errors because of their first language and their errors are due to interference of first language into second language.

So this study aims to compare compound nouns in Persian and English in order to investigate structural differences and similarities and to identify interlingual and intralingual errors coming from first language and target language respectively that are made by Persian learners.

Research Question

Is there any differences between Farsi and English compound nouns?

Research Hypothesis

The above research question could be formulated in following research null hypothesis.

H₀: There is no differences between compound nouns in Persian and English.

Review of the Literature

According to (shabani-jadidi, 2012), Persian is an interesting language to observe in order to investigate lexical representations since it belongs to the same language family as English/French and German do, yet it is different from many of these in its morphological richness and productivity of its compound verbs.

According to (Abolhassani chime, 2006), in a phrase, grammatical roles of the parts are devoted as one to the head and the whole group rather than the parts contributes to the role of the phrase, Different ways of argumentation that can be established for distinction between phrases and compound words can be classified into 4 classes: phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic.

Farshid vard (1351) believes it is very difficult to identify and define the compound words in Farsi, because to gain the criteria of compound words, we should recognize compound forms from some other related and close structure, Such as derived words and phrases.

As (Abolhassani chime, 2012) believes, in topicalization "one word" can be topicalized out of a phrase but not out of a compound words.

According to (shabani-jadidi, 2012), in Persian compounding is a very highly productive verb formation process which is applied to produce novel verbs even with loan non verbal elements and Persian base verbs.

Foroodi Nejad and Paradis (2009) investigated the cross-linguistic transfer of compound words in

Persian-English bilingual, They reported that the cross-linguistic transfer was bidirectional, that is, both from Persian into English and vice versa.

This section reviewed some studies on compound words but very little has been done on compound nouns, so I will discuss compound nouns in Persian and English in the following sections.

Compound Nouns in English

English compound nouns include phrases and clauses.

A. phrases

Noun phrases function as a simple noun taking the same positions in different sentences, in cases they may be called "expanded nouns" the head of the phrase or groups is a noun which represents a thing-animate or inanimate-including human (Lock, 1996; Master 1996; Frank, 1995 cited in mirhassani(2003), p. 76). According to mirhassani (2003), These groups or phrases are formed by

- 1) Noun + adjective : good night
- 2) Noun + infinitive : He is subject to attack
- 3) An infinitive/gerund + noun/pronoun : I want to see you
- 4) Noun + preposition phrase : The water in the bath is warm
- 5) An infinitive qualities + noun : some of the students
- 6) Preposition phrase acting as nouns : He swam in the cold water

B. Noun clauses

Noun clauses like noun phrases and simple nouns can function as the subject, object, subject complement, object after "it", object of prepositions. They usually contain markers as that, where, when, why, which

Ex: That he is a good teacher is well known (subject- statement)

Ex: He does not know when he will get the money (object- question-word)

Compound Nouns In Persian

Persian compound nouns also include phrases and clauses too. They can function as nouns in sentences and appear in any position that a simple noun does.

A.phrase

Persian nouns phrases are formed in different way:

- 1) two base nouns can combine and make a compound one:
/sarbaz xane/ (barracks) => /sarbaz/ (soldier) + /xane/ (house)
- 2) Two nouns of which the second qualifies the first
/ped&r zan / (father in law)
- 3) Two nouns joined by the connective /o/ which may mean "and":
/ ab o h&va/ (climate/weather)

- 4)by the stems of two verbs plus /o/
/gir o dar/ (struggle)
- 5)by the combination of an adjective and a noun:
/ no ruz/ (new year)
- 6)Two nouns combined by the / ezafe/ sound /e/ :
/t&xtexab/ (bed)
- 7)Two nouns connected by a preposition :
/etamad be nafs/ (self-confidence)
- 8)Reflexive pronouns:
/xodem&n/ (my self)

B.clauses

All noun clauses can be placed in noun positions.

/ou porsid c/I gofti / (object-question word)

He asked what I said

/anc^e gofti xub bud / (subject-statement)

What you said good was

Persian and English nouns have almost the same function , but they form differently. Even the smallest differences can cause problems and reviewing the points in both languages and outlining them by the learner is of great value to his education (pp. 76-90).

Syntactically

Headedness

In English , the right most word in a compound is the head of the compound, the head is the part of a word or phrase that determines its broad meaning and grammatical category, in English the right most word in a compound is the head of compound, thus when the two words fall into different categories , the class of the second or final word will be the grammatical category of the compound, for example noun + adjective = adjective => head+ strong= head strong(Framkin, Rodman, Hyams, 2007, p. 93)

But in Persian as Foroodi Nejad and Paradis (2009) assert, structure of compound in Persian could be both left-or right headed for example:

Ab sib gol khaneh

Water apple(apple juice) flower house (green house)

Phonologically

According to Yarmohamadi (2005), in English nominal compounds ordinarily have a strong accent on the first component with the following specifications:

1. compounds could be constructed from two nouns for example :

Black bird, bus stop, street car, drug store

- 2.The compounds can become the first components of other larger compounds but the pattern of accent placement remains un-changed

Ex : drug store clerk, street car driver, pay day check

But nominal phrases of modifiers- head type carry the primary accent on the head noun for example

black bird , placing the strong accent on the last elements of a nominal compound, thus creating on accentuation pattern analogues to a nominal modifier-head type phrase and yielding to an error or a case of ambiguity for example black bird (meaning a special bird) is pronounced as black bird (any bird with black features) (pp. 100-101).this can cause intralingual error because of overgeneralization , that Persian learners generalize second language rules.

According to yarmohamadi(2005), in Persian nominal compounds normally have accent on the last member of the compound which then follows the pattern of the simple word in isolation, the other members of the compound decrease their inherent prominence at a lower level, thus the original strong accents of the syllables in the other members are automatically reduced to a secondary level, the varieties of compounds receive strong accents on the final elements :

- 1)compounds made up of two or more simple or complex elements

Ex: /telefo`n/ and /xane`/ => /telefon xa`ne/

“Telephone” “ house” “ telephone office”

- 2)conjoined nominal expressions and nominalized sentences

Ex: /ka`r/ and /kushe`sh/ => /kar-o-kushe`sh/

“Work “ “effort “ “ hardmanship”

- 3)compound numeral

Ex: /bist-o-se`/

“Twenty three”

- 4)in compounds functioning as vocatives, primary accent shift to the initial syllable of the first element

Ex: /ke`tab forush/!

“oh you bookseller” (pp. 77-78).

There is a similarity between English and Persian in this case in other word, in english pronouncing vocative expressions with the primary accent on the first syllable of the element, ”oh lazy bo`y!” may be uttered as “oh la`zy boy!”(yarmohamadi, 2005).

As you saw, there are some differences between the position of stress on compound nouns in English and Persian , In the phonology area , Persian learners may make intralingual and interlingual errors(interference)

Semantically

In English , The meaning of a compound is not always the sum of the meaning of its part for example a black-board may be green or white, other compounds reveal other meaning relations between the parts which are not entirely consistent because many compounds are idiomatic, a boathouse is a house for boats but a cathouse is not a house for cats

(Framkin et al, 2007,p. 94).so sometimes Persian learners make an error because they do not have knowledge of idioms phrases and translate wrongly. Also in Persian the sum of the meaning of the individual words always is not the meaning of compound words for example the word / far neshin/ means “ra?ies” “dignity” “setting” “ boss”

Discussion and conclusion

In this section we can answer the research question that was “is there any differences between English-Persian compound nouns? The research indicated some differences and similarities between compound nouns in Persian and English. Persian and English compounds have the point of overlap in regard to “right-headedness” and this case is the similarity between them, but Persian compound nouns may be either right-headed or left-headed so Persian compound nouns are more flexible than English compound nouns, it can be a difference between them, as research shows another difference is related to phonology area that is the position of stress on compound nouns, in English a strong accent is on the first component but in Persian on the last component, therefore here the research hypothesis is rejected. It is suggested that the teachers in EFL classroom emphasize compound combinations because learners may make intralingual errors as well as interlingual errors.

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