

Debonding of compounds in French, English, Dutch and German

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Introduction

● Research topic:

- Focus on the emergence of new adjectives (and adverbs) arising from nominal compound members
 - How to account for these “new” (often informal) forms?
 - Instances of a process of “debonding”?
 - Which (language-specific) factors may favor or disfavor debonding?

● Method:

- Today’s talk: a summary of main results
 - grounded on synchronic, diachronic and comparative corpus-based case studies (Fr, Eng, Du, Germ)
 - Corpora: *COW* (Schäfer & Bildhauer 2012), *GlossaNet* (Fairon, Macé & Naets 2008)

Outline

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 - Multiple source constructions
 - Debonding and reanalysis of the linking morpheme: Dutch *reuze* 'lit. giant; great, very'
 - Debonding and clipping: Dutch *reuze* 'lit. giant; great, very'
 - Debonding and conversion: German *spitze* 'lit. top; excellent'

1. Debonding of affixoids

1.1. Affixoids

◎ Definition:

- “morphemes which look like parts of compounds, and do occur as lexemes, but have a specific and more restricted meaning when used as part of a compound” (Booij 2009: 208)

◎ Examples:

- Du. *reus* ‘giant’ > *reuzecharmant* ‘very charming’
- Fr. *clé* / Eng. *key* > *position-clé* / *key position* ‘very important position’
- Germ. *Spitze* ‘top’ > *Spitzenleistung* ‘excellent performance’

1.2. Debonding: definition

○ Definition:

- “a composite change whereby a bound morpheme in a specific linguistic context becomes a free morpheme” (Norde 2009: 186)

○ Parameters (Norde 2009):

- *Severance*: bound morpheme → free morpheme
- *Flexibilization*: syntactic context expansion (e.g. attributive → predicative)
- *Scope expansion*: e.g. scope over a NP
- *Recategorialization*: N > Adj/Adv

1.3. Debonding: some examples

● FRENCH:

- (1) *Le Sénat irlandais a voté aujourd'hui un projet de loi de finances-clé (...). (GlossaNet 2011)*
'(...) a key financial reform proposal (...)'
- (2) *Ajoutons que le chiffre des abstentionniste [sic], qui depuis ma naissance est record à chaque scrutin, est de 7.218.592. (GlossaNet 2011)*
'(...) the figure (...) is at record-level (...)'

● ENGLISH:

- (3) *The U.S. (...) has said it will do more in terms of intelligence-sharing to (...) really restore some -- some law and order in these pockets of lawlessness that -- that tend to be along some very key border areas. (COCA)*
- (4) *the champion terrible explanation for going public (...) (NYT)*

● DUTCH:

(5) *Bij zowel **top** als lagere managers, en politici, valt dan te constateren dat vormen van disfunctioneren (...), bij de toplagen dat heel vaak niet gebeurt.* (NLCOW2012)

‘In the case of both top and minor managers (...)’

(6) *Ik zou het gewoon weg **reuze** vinden als je eens langs kwam.* (NLCOW2012)

‘I really think it would be great (lit. giant) if you came by once’

● GERMAN:

(7) *War echt ein **spitze** Nachmittag!* (DECOW2012)

‘It was really an excellent (lit. top) afternoon!’

(8) *Mittlerweile eines meiner absoluten Lieblingsalben ... jeder Track ist **bombe** !* (DECOW2012)

‘(...) every song is great (lit. bomb)!’

1.4. Previous case studies

- Du. *reuze* / Fr. *géant* / Germ. *Riesen* / Sw. *jätte*
'lit. giant; great'
 - Van Goethem & Hiligsmann (2012; 2014), Van Goethem & Norde (forthc.)
- Fr. *clé* / Du. *sleutel* / Eng. *key* 'lit. key; most important, crucial'
 - Amiot & Van Goethem (2012), Van Goethem (2012), Van Goethem & De Smet (2014)
- Fr. *limite* 'lit. limit; borderline, almost (inacceptable)'
 - Van Goethem & Amiot (2012)
- Du. *top* / Germ. *spitze* 'top; excellent'
 - Van Goethem & Hüning (2013)

2. Constraints on debonding

Cf. Van Goethem & De Smet (2014)

2.1. Semantics

- ◉ Debonding restricted to morphemes with a qualifying interpretation (mostly intensifying /evaluative affixoids):
 - “The **meaning of intensification** that is connected to these nouns is a type of meaning **expressed prototypically by adjectives [and adverbs]**, and hence the categorial reinterpretation of these nouns in this context is a natural development.” (Booij 2010 : 61)
 - E.g. *key/clé* ‘crucial, most important’, *reuze* ‘great’, *limite* ‘almost unacceptable’, *spitze* ‘top, excellent’, etc.
- ◉ Debonding impossible in case of classifying compounds:
 - Fr. *requin-marteau* / Du. *hamerhaai* ‘hammerhead shark’
 - **requin vraiment marteau* ‘really hammerhead shark’
 - **de haai is hamer* ‘the shark is hammer’

2.2. Compound cohesion

○ Eng/Fr:

- Little or no cohesion
 - Fr: no distinctive word stress, spelling irregularities (*mot(-)clé*), internal inflection (*beaux-arts*)
 - Eng: irregular word stress (*'apple cake vs apple 'pie*)
- Fuzzy boundary between compounds and phrases
 - *key sector / secteur(-)clé*
 - *Key economic sector / secteur économique clé*

○ Du/Germ:

- Strong cohesion: spelling, distinctive word stress, loss of inflection
- Clear distinction between compounds and phrases
 - *sleutelsector / Schlüsselsektor*
 - **sleutel economische sector / *Schlüssel Wirtschaftssektor*

2.3. Adjective inflection

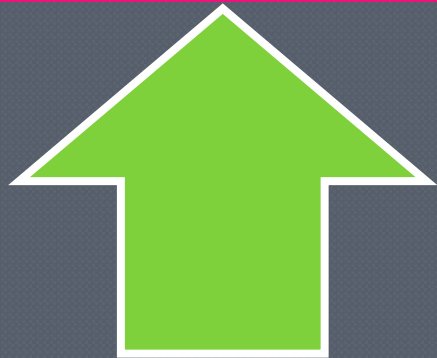
● Eng/Fr:

- not an (important) obstacle to debonding
- Eng: no adjective inflection (*a key position, a very key position*)
- Fr:
 - Gender inflection not always observable (*une jolie fille, une annonce publicitaire*)
 - Often formal resemblance N/A: *une position vraiment clé* (~ *privé(e)*) ‘a really key position’; *un cas un peu limite* (~ *insolite*) ‘a somewhat borderline case’

● Du/Germ:

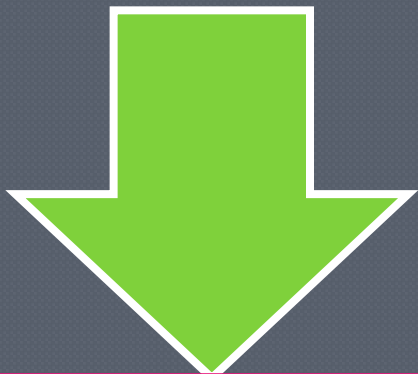
- Complex inflectional system: possible obstacle to N > A reanalysis
- Defective (invariable) adjectives (cf. De Smet & Van de Velde 2014)
 - Du: *een reuze / grote kerel* ‘a great / tall guy’, *die kerel is reuze / groot* ‘that guy is great / tall’
 - Germ: *Ein S/spitze Preis* ‘a top price’, *ein B/bombe Stadion* ‘a great stadium’

2.4. Hypothesis



+ Debonding (Eng, Fr)

- cohesion
- inflection



- Debonding (Du, Germ)

- + cohesion
- + inflection

- "Germanic Sandwich": Eng > Du > Germ (cf. van Haeringen 1956)
- But: How to account for the existing cases of debonding in Dutch and German?
- Hypothesis: Debonding is possible when it interacts with other processes:
 1. reanalysis of linking morpheme -e
 2. clipping
 3. conversion



"Multiple source constructions"

(cf. De Smet, Van de Velde & Ghesquière 2013)

3. A multiple source account

3.1. Multiple source constructions

- De Smet, Van de Velde & Ghesquière (2013):
 - "[I]nnovations in language change may derive not just from one, but from different source constructions at once. That is, change often seems to involve some interaction between lineages or between different branches of a lineage" (p. 473)
- Example: suppletive verb forms (De Smet & Van de Velde 2014):
 - Fr. (*nous*) *allons* 'we go' (< Latin *ambulare*)
 - Fr. (*je*) *vais* 'I go' (< Latin *vadere*)
 - Fr. (*j'*) *irai* 'I will go' (< Latin *ire*)

3.2. Reanalysis of the linking morpheme

- Inflection of Dutch attributively used adjectives:

	Masculine/feminine (<i>de</i>)		Neuter (<i>het</i>)	
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite
Singular	-e	-e	∅	-e
Plural	-e	-e	-e	-e

- Hypothesis: reanalysis of the linking morpheme -e as inflectional morpheme triggers debonding:
 - een reuzenstap* ‘a step of a giant’ > *een reuzestap* ‘a huge step’
 - sleutelsector*, **de sleutelesector* ‘the key sector’
(cf. Van Goethem & Hiligsmann 2014)

3.3. Debonding and clipping

● Clipping of adjectival compounds in Dutch (used predicatively):

(9) *Zijn eerste liefde was Carine, (...). Laurent was **stapel** op haar, zoals dat wel vaker gebeurt bij een eerste verliefdheid.* (GlossaNet 2011)

‘His first love was Carine, (...). Laurent was crazy (lit. pile) about her, as often happens at first love.’

→ *stapel* < *stapelveerliefd* ‘lit. pile-in love; madly in love’

(10) *Zo gaat dat nu eenmaal wanneer je er, compleet onverwachts, op wordt gewezen dat je niet zo **piep** meer bent.* (GlossaNet 2011)

‘So that's how it goes when you are, completely unexpected, pointed out that you're not so young (lit. peep) anymore.’

→ *piep* < *piepjong* ‘lit. peep-young; very young’

- Clipping possibly accounts for the predicative uses of *reuze* (cf. Van Goethem & Hiligsmann 2014):

(11) *Ik heb het één keer mogen meemaken en dat was reuze!* (Google News 2011)

‘I had the luck to experience it once and that was terrific (lit. giant)’
→ *reuze* < *reuzeleuk* ‘lit. giant-pleasant; great, terrific’

- Argument : semantic specialization of *reuze* used predicatively (‘great, terrific’)

(12) *Het was reuze* ‘it was terrific’

(13) *een reuze ontgoocheling* ‘a huge disappointment’

(14) **de ontgoocheling was reuze* ‘the disappointment was huge’



Interaction between debonding (attributive position) and clipping (predicative position) in Dutch

3.4. Debonding and conversion

- Parallel cases are considered instances of morphological N>A conversion in German (cf. Pittner & Berman 2006, Berman 2009, Meibauer 2013):
 - Categorical ambiguity of nouns used predicatively:
 - “It is argued that **N→A conversion is linked to the predicative position**, which, due to its syntactic and semantic characteristics, is well suited to conversion. Once the adjectival use is established in the predicative position, it can spread to other syntactic environments” (Pittner & Berman 2006 : 233)

(15) *Das ist (der) Hammer ! > Das ist (total) hammer !*
‘That is (completely) unbelievable!’

● Case study: Germ. *spitze* ‘top’ (Van Goethem & Hüning 2013)

- Compound member:

(16) *Spitzen*produkt ‘top product’, *Spitzen*mannschaft ‘top team’,
*Spitzen*verdiener ‘top money-maker’, etc.

- Predicative use:

- Comparison frequencies (DECOW2012-01):

- “ist Spitze” (N) (n=198)

(17) *Das Preis-Leistungsverhältnis ist Spitze* ‘The price/quality ratio is excellent’

- “ist spitze” (A) (n=426)

(18) *Der Film ist spitze* ‘The film is excellent’

- Degree modification (DECOW2012-00):

- “absolute Spitze_N” (n=214) > “absolut spitze_A” (n=173) > “absolut Spitze_{A/N}” (n=68) > “absolute spitze_{N/A}” (n=51)



Gradual N>A conversion in predicative position

- Attributive uses:

- “ein Spitzen N” (N):

(19) *Uli Hoeneß ist ein Spitzen Manager* ‘a top manager’

- “ein spitzen N” (N/A):

(20) *Sonst war es für uns ein spitzen Urlaub!* ‘a top holiday’

- “ein Spitze N” (A/N):

(21) *Zuerst dachte ich, das ist ein Spitze Preis* ‘a top price’

- “ein spitze N” (A):

(22) *War echt ein spitze Nachmittag!* ‘a top afternoon’

 Gradual debonding of N+N compounds in attributive position

4. Conclusions

Conclusions

- **Language-internal factors** (compound cohesion, adjectival inflection) may either favor (Eng, Fr) or disfavor (Du, Germ) debonding of compounds.
- However, debonding occurs in “disfavored” languages thanks to an **interaction with other processes** (“multiple source construction”):
 - Reanalysis of the linking morpheme -e (*een reuze stap* ‘a gigantic stap’)
 - Clipping (*het was reuze!* ‘it was great!’)
 - Conversion (*es war spitze!* ‘it was excellent!’)

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Reuze bedankt!

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