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SEMANTIC LINKS BETWEEN CONSTITUENTS OF ENGLISH COMPOUND NOUNS AND PHRASAL NOUNS: *PARENT*+NOUN VS. *PARENTAL*+NOUN

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Abstract: The present paper investigates semantic relations which connect meanings of constituents of selected English noun-noun compounds and adjective-noun phrasal nouns. The questions considered here include, among others, the preference for the subject-type or object-type reading of the left-hand constituent (when the right-hand component is a deverbal noun) and the possibility of replacing the noun-noun construction by the adjective-noun construction in the case of particular compound types.

Key words: noun-noun compounds, adjective-noun combinations, compound semantics, synthetic compounds.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to compare the meanings of selected English noun-noun (NN) compounds and adjective-noun (AN) combinations as well as to identify implicit semantic links between their constituents. I investigate the coexistence of NN and AN combinations which contain the noun *parent* or the denominal relational adjective *parental* as their left-hand element.

Morphological compound nouns in English are productively formed by combining two (or more) nouns, e.g., *toy shop* and *car production*. And conversely, formation of morphological adjective-noun compounds is less productive in English, and, as is pointed out by Giegerich (2005) and Bauer et al. (2013: 452), it may even be difficult to distinguish between AN compounds and AN phrases. Selected AN combinations, such as *hothouse* and *redskin*, pass tests for compoundhood (as discussed by, among others, Cetnarowska 2019: 25-30; Lieber & Štekauer 2009; Szymanek 1989: 36-43), since they are written as single orthographic words, exhibit semantic opacity, and the main stress falls on the left-hand member. Some other AN combinations, such as *long drink* and *slow food*, do not display

(all) the properties diagnostic for English compounds. In spite of showing semantic opacity, the stress here falls on the right-hand member and the components of the combination are written as separate orthographic words.

In this paper, I am concerned with AN compound-like combinations which contain the denominal adjective *parental*. Denominal adjectives such as *parental*, *electric*, or *presidential*, exhibit a general meaning which can be stated as 'relating to N' (where N is the base noun, e.g., *parent* in *parental*), 'pertaining to N', or 'associated with N'. They are referred to as nonpredicating adjectives (Levi 1978), associative adjectives (Giegerich 2005), or relational adjectives (Rainer 2013; ten Hacken 2019). Levi (ibid.) treats expressions consisting of a nonpredicating adjective and a noun as so-called complex nominals, i.e., as lexical constructions. She points out that denominal relational adjectives, such as *electrical* in *electrical engineer* and *musical* in *musical box*, are noun-like in their semantic interpretation and differ in their syntactic properties from other adjectives. Relational adjectives are non-gradable and cannot occur in the predicative position (cf. **very electrical engineer*, **This engineer is electrical*). Giegerich (ibid.) employs the pro-form *one* test to draw a boundary between AN lexical combinations and AN syntactic phrases. He concludes that *electrical engineer* is a lexical (i.e., compound-like) expression since its head cannot be replaced by *one* (cf. **the electrical engineer and an electronic one*) while *rural policeman* is a syntactic unit (cf. *a rural policeman or an urban one*).

Instead of attempting to divide combinations of relational adjectives and nouns neatly into lexical and syntactic units, I adopt the view expressed by, among others, Gaeta and Ricca (2009) and Booij (2010). Gaeta and Ricca (ibid.) employ the feature [±morphological] to separate expressions which are outputs of a morphological process from those which are produced by syntactic rules or schemas. They use the feature [±lexical] to distinguish between expressions which have a lexical (i.e., naming) function and those which have a descriptive function. They analyse AN multi-word units, such as *electrical engineer*, as [-morphological] and [+lexical] expressions. In a similar vein, Booij (ibid., 168) observes that lexical units can be built by means of syntactic construction schemas. AN expressions exhibit lexical integrity: their constituents are not subject to syntactic operations, such as reordering and modification (cf. **engineer electrical* and **parental unexpected approval*). Following Booij (ibid.), Masini and Audring (2019), and Cetnarowska (2019), I refer to *electrical engineer* and *parental approval* as phrasal nouns, which exhibit naming function in spite of being built by syntactic processes.

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While semantic links between constituents of NN compounds have been investigated by a number of researchers (e.g., Bourque 2014; Jackendoff 2010; Levi 1978; Pepper & Arnaud 2020; Schäfer 2018; ten Hacken 2016), the interpretation of AN phrasal nouns has been discussed less frequently (though see Levi 1978; Rainer 2013; ten Hacken 2019; Warren 1984). Even less attention has been given to the comparison of the semantics of groups of NN compounds and corresponding AN units. Therefore, in this paper I analyse the meanings of English NN compounds and AN combinations which share the same left-hand constituent: either the noun *parent* or the denominal adjective *parental*. The data for the analysis are collected from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Special focus is laid on synthetic compounds, which are headed by deverbal nouns and whose left-hand member can be treated as an argument of the head (cf. Plag 2003: 149; Spencer 2005: 88). I consider the question whether there are discernible preferences for the object-type or the subject-type interpretation of the non-head constituent of selected NN synthetic compounds as opposed to the interpretation of the relational adjective in corresponding AN combinations. The polysemy of NN and AN units is illustrated. I also identify types of *parent*+NOUN compounds, which lack corresponding *parental*+NOUN phrasal nouns.

The layout of the paper is as follows. The immediately following section mentions some influential classifications of implicit semantic relations observable between constituents of NN compounds, as well as between the semantic base of the denominal adjective and the head noun in AN combinations. Section 3 presents briefly the methodology adopted and the research questions posed in this article. In Section 4, a family of NN compounds is discussed which contain the noun *parent* as their left-hand element. AN combinations are then analysed in which the denominal adjective *parental* occurs in the pre-head position. Furthermore, a brief comparison is carried out of the meanings and frequency of use of members of selected pairs of NN compounds and AN phrasal nouns. Conclusions are given in Section 5.

2. Implicit relations between constituents of AN phrasal nouns and NN compounds

In her analysis couched in the framework of Generative Semantics, Levi (1978) proposed nine Recoverably Deletable Predicates (abbreviated as RDPs and listed in 1) in the underlying structure of complex nominals. RDPs signal the relationship between elements of complex nominals (including both NN compounds and AN combinations) and are assumed to be deleted in the course of derivation.

(1) CAUSE, HAVE, MAKE, USE, BE, IN, FOR, FROM, ABOUT

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Jackendoff (2010) identifies a set of thirteen semantic functions which connect the meanings of constituents of English NN compounds and which are largely based on Levi's list of Recoverably Deletable Predicates. Related sets of semantic functions have been postulated by Bourque (2014) and revised by Pepper and Arnaud (2020).

Bauer and Tarasova (2013), following Levi (ibid.), argue that the same type of implicit semantic relations can be observed between components of NN compounds and AN expressions. This is shown in (2), adapted (with some modifications) from Bauer and Tarasova (ibid., 5-6). The predicate CAUSE (similarly to HAVE and MAKE) is reversible, as is indicated by the occurrence of the relations N1 CAUSE N2 and N2 CAUSE N1 in (2).

(2)	Relation/ RDP	NN compound	AN phrasal noun
	N1 CAUSE N2	*sex scandal*, *withdrawal symptom*	*viral infection*
	N2 CAUSE N1	*tear gas*, *shock news*	*malarial mosquitoes*
	N1 HAVE N2	*lemon peel*, *school gate*	*feminine intuition*
	N2 HAVE N1	*camera phone*, *picture book*	*industrial area*
	N1 MAKE N2	*court order*, *snowball*	*molecular chain*
	N2 MAKE N1	*computer industry*, *silk worm*	*musical clock*
	N2 USE N1	*steam iron*, *wind farm*	*manual labour*
	N2 BE N1	*island state*, *soldier ant*	*professorial friends*
	N2 IN N1	*field mouse*, *letter bomb*	*autumnal rain*
	N2 FOR N1	*arms budget*, *steak knife*	*avian sanctuary*
	N2 FROM N1	*business profit*, *olive oil*	*solar energy*
	N2 ABOUT N1	*tax law*, *love letter*	*criminal policy*

Levi (ibid.) postulated her RDPs to explicate the semantic link between elements of root compounds (as defined by Lieber 1992 and Spencer 2005). These are compounds whose head is a non-derived noun (e.g., *doghouse*) or a morphologically complex noun, which is not deverbal (e.g., *family responsibility)*. They contrast with synthetic compounds listed in (3-5), in which the non-head corresponds to an argument in a predicate denoted by the base verb. The left-hand noun in the compounds in (3) can be given the subject-type interpretation (cf. *airline hiring* and *The airline hired pilots*). It is regarded as subject-referencing by Bauer et al. (2013: 467-471). The pre-heads of the compounds in (4) correspond to direct objects in their sentential paraphrases. The pre-head nouns in (5) are prepositional-object referencing, as is shown by the possibility to paraphrase *army retiree* as 'someone who retires FROM the army'.

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(3) subject-referencing N1: *party nomination*, *airline hiring*, *Ford nominee*, *nightfall*

(4) object-referencing N1: *baby swapping*, *taxi driver*, *ball kick*

(5) prepositional-object referencing N1: *ash disposal*, *army retiree*, *tax vote*

When discussing possible senses of AN combinations, Rainer (2013: 19) notes that relational adjectives in some Slavic languages cannot express the direct-object relation, as is shown by the infelicity of ?*furgonnyj voditiel* (lit. van.RA driver) 'van driver' in Russian. This restriction appears to be violable for English, as is indicated by the acceptability of the object-referencing adjectives in the complex nominals *presidential assassination* (cf. *Someone assassinated the president*), *papal abduction*, and *ambassadorial nomination*. Consequently, one of the questions asked in Section 4 is which relational adjectives in the AN combinations under consideration can be treated as referring to the object (i.e., Patient/Theme participant) of a given event. First, however, in the immediately following section (i.e., Section 3) I briefly present the methodology and the research questions.

3. Methodology, data collection, and research questions

Giegerich (2005: 578) argues, in agreement with Levi (1978: 52), that neither the head nor the non-head constituent of an AN complex nominal can provide a clue to the interpretation of the whole unit. He emphasizes the importance of encyclopaedic knowledge in predicting the intended meaning of AN expressions, such as *musical box* and *electrical engineer*.

However, other researchers (e.g., Bagasheva 2020; Bauer 2019; Cetnarowska (forthcoming); Mattiello & Dressler 2018) highlight the advantages of the paradigmatic approach to the study of the meanings of compounds and multi-word units. Mattiello and Dressler (ibid.) notice that in some compound families the semantic relationships holding between compound components are fairly stable. This is shown for the class of English compound adjectives which contain the head *collar*, e.g., *white-collar* 'relating to non-manual work', *blue-collar* 'relating to manual work', *green-collar* 'designating work relating to the preservation of the environment', and *pink-collar* 'relating to employment associated with women'. The X-*collar* group of compounds is regarded by Mattiello and Dressler (ibid.) as a nuclear compound family. It contains compounds which show the same category of their constituents, the same degree of transparency and the same type of semantic relationships.

Consequently, I carry out a semantic analysis of a family of NN compound nouns and a corresponding family of AN phrasal nouns. I employ the data from COCA and examine NN compounds which have the same pre-head constituent, namely the noun *parent*. I compare them with AN phrasal nouns which have the denominal adjective *parental* in the pre-head position. I focus on *parent*+NOUN compounds

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and *parental*+NOUN phrasal nouns which show the highest number of attestations in COCA. I pay particular attention to NN compounds and AN phrasal nouns whose head is a deverbal noun.

When identifying semantic links between constituents of compound nouns and phrasal nouns I make reference to Recoverably Deletable Predicates (from Levi 1978) and to semantic functions adopted by Bourque (2014) or Pepper and Arnaud (2020). I also make use of the semantico-syntactic classification of compounds postulated by Scalise and Bisetto (2009). They draw a distinction between subordinate, coordinate, and attributive-appositional compounds. The complement-head (or argument-head) relation can be postulated between constituents of subordinate compounds, such as *table leg* and *car production*. Elements of coordinate compounds can be linked by the conjunction *and*, e.g., *actor-singer* 'someone who is both an actor and a singer'. In the case of attributive-appositional compounds, such as *hot dog* and *snail mail*, the pre-head component acts as a modifier of the head.

The following research questions are addressed in the next section:
1) What covert semantic relations can be observed between elements of NN compounds and AN phrasal nouns under analysis?
2) Is the choice between the object-referencing and subject-referencing interpretation of the non-head element determined by the choice between the NN construction and the AN construction, or is it influenced by the derivational type of the head (which can be a suffixal or a zero-derived deverbal noun in synthetic compounds and compound-like units)?
3) Which *parent*+NOUN compounds cannot be replaced by *parental*+NOUN phrasal nouns?

4. A case study: *parent*+NOUN and *parental*+NOUN combinations

4.1 NN compounds

A search in COCA for the string *parent*+NOUN brings 10,720 instances of such NN units, 1,513 of them being unique combinations. I restricted my attention to the 100 most frequent combinations. Fifteen of the most common ones are given below (with the number of their attestations in COCA given in brackets).

(6) *parent company* (2092), *parent involvement* (663), *parent education* (330), *parent training* (235), *parent star* (147), *parent organization* (142), *parent teacher* (136), *parent rating* (142), *parent companies* (117), *parent families* (116), *parent report* (110), *parent element* (109), *parent corporation* (100), *parent support* (100), *parent participation* (91)

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The NN compounds *parent company* (or its plural form *parent companies*), *parent star*, *parent element*, and *parent corporation* are root compounds, in which the modifier noun *parent* exhibits the extended sense 'something out of which another thing has developed' (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parent). When explaining the meanings of those compounds, one could employ Levi's implicit predicate BE, e.g., *parent company* 'a company which is (like) a parent for another company'. The corresponding semantic relation employed by Bourque (2014) or Pepper and Arnaud (2020) is FUNCTION, i.e., 'a company which serves as a parent'.

It is worth noting that some other NN combinations in (6) are parts of larger NNN or ANN units in the exemplary sentences culled from COCA. For instance, *parent teacher* is an exocentric coordinate compound, which does not occur in isolation in COCA but which appears as a complex pre-head in NNN combinations, such as *parent teacher organization*, *parent teacher conference*, *parent teacher association*, and *parent teacher meetings*. Additionally, there are 659 instances of the hyphenated *parent-teacher* compound in COCA (e.g., *parent-teacher conference*).

There are also *parent*+NOUN endocentric coordinate compounds, which can occur as independent units, e.g., *parent volunteer* 'both a parent and a volunteer'.

The string *parent families* does not form a constituent, yet it can be found in various ANN combinations in COCA, e.g., *single parent families*, *one parent families*, *two-parent families*, and *the gay and lesbian parent families*. The noun *parent* forms here a complex modifier with the preceding adjective or with the numeral (i.e., *single parent*, *one parent*).

In the case of synthetic *parent*+NOUN compounds headed by deverbal nouns denoting events (for instance, *interview*) or denoting results of events (e.g., *report* or *rating*), a question can be asked whether the noun *parent* is object-referencing or subject-referencing. As observed by Lieber (1992: 81) or Spencer (2005: 88), typically the first constituent of English synthetic compounds is interpreted as the internal argument (i.e., the direct object) of the verb, which is the derivational base of the second (deverbal) constituent. On the other hand, being a parent requires playing an active role in the child's life. Consequently, the noun *parent* may be expected to denote an Agent and to exhibit the subject-referencing bias in synthetic compounds.

The *parent*+NOUN compounds listed in (6) with the subject-referencing non-head are *parent participation* (cf. *parents participate in school life*), *parent ratings* (i.e., ratings of the child's behavioural problems provided by its parent), and *parent report* (i.e., a report prepared by a child's

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parent). Some other NN compounds attested in COCA in which *parent* receives the subject interpretation are mentioned in (7):

(7) *parent consent*, *parent expectation*, *parent responses*, *parent meetings*, *parent behaviour*, *parent permission, parent success*

Lieber (2010) observes that subject-referencing non-heads are easier to find in compounds headed by non-affixal (i.e., zero-derived) deverbal nouns than among synthetic compounds headed by suffixal deverbal nouns. This is not fully confirmed by the NN expressions in (7), which contain both suffixal and non-affixal deverbal nouns as their right-hand elements.

In the case of *parent involvement*, *parent education*, and *parent training* in (6) the pre-head noun corresponds to the direct object (with the role of Patient or Theme) of the deverbal constituent, as is shown by the sentential paraphrase *Someone trains parents* provided for the compound *parent training*. A few other instances of synthetic *parent*+NOUN compounds in COCA in which *parent* is object-referencing are listed in (8).

(8) *parent empowerment, parent engagement, parent interviews*, *parent notification, parent surveys*

Parent support and *parent care* are ambiguous between the subject-referencing and object-referencing interpretation of the left-hand constituent. Encyclopaedic knowledge generally suggests that a parent should be interpreted as someone who provides care and support for the child. This is shown by the sentences in (9) culled from COCA.

(9) a. *when we know already that parent care would be better than day care*
b. *Parent support. According to Mijares (2009): Parents were in the background supporting the teachers*

In contrast, the expectation that the pre-head noun denotes the Patient/Theme argument of the verb (from which the head noun is derived) is met in the sentences in (10). As is implied both by the co-text (i.e., the surrounding discourse in 10a) and the cultural context, elderly parents are taken care of by their adult children whereas school children's parents (mentioned in 10b) receive support from their peers, teachers, or psychologists (see Kövecses 2017 for a detailed discussion of types of context). In half of the instances of *parent support* in COCA (56 occurrences) this NN compound

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forms a constituent of a larger compound. The head nouns in the combinations *parent support groups*, *parent support worker*, *parent support program*, *parent support network* and *parent support team* imply that parents can be interpreted as Patients (or as participants simultaneously acting as Patients and Agents).

(10) a. *a new study, which finds that women appear to provide as much elderly parent care as they can, while men contribute as little*
b. *who offers counseling services to both parents and children in the form of parent support groups, family counseling, and individual counseling*

While the compounds *parent care* and *parent support* are polysemous and show two distinct interpretations, i.e., 'care by the parent' and 'care for the parent', the compound *parent talk* exhibits promiscuity (in the sense of the term used by Jackendoff 2010). It appears in COCA mainly as a name of a community-based organization "helping families with young children connect, learn, play, and grow together" (https://parenttalk.org/). Several implicit predicates can be used to explicate its meaning, e.g., talk FOR parents and talk ABOUT parents. Alternatively, it can be treated as a synthetic compound whose left-hand constituent is subject-referencing (cf. *Parents talk*).

Parent education can be treated as a synthetic compound with an object-referencing pre-head noun (as suggested by the paraphrase *Someone educates parents*), or as a promiscuous root compound whose constituents can be linked by various implicit predicates: FOR (education for parents), HAVE (education that parents possess), or ABOUT (education on how to be a parent).

Parent organization occurs as a polysemous compound, the paraphrase of which requires either the implicit semantic predicate BE, i.e., 'an organization which is (like) a parent' (as in the phrase *The Smithsonian, the Hirshhorn's parent organization*,) or the predicate FOR 'an organization for parents' (as in the phrase *The parent organization, where Peterson volunteers*).

4.2 AN combinations

Let us now investigate *parental*+NOUN complex nominals in COCA. There are 11,502 instances of such combinations, 1,432 of them being unique strings. As in the case of *parent*+NOUN units, I examined the 100 most frequent combinations. Fifteen of the most common ones are given in (11), with the number of their instantiations in COCA added in brackets.

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(11) *parental involvement* (854), *parental rights* (684), *parental consent* (571), *parental support* (387), *parental control* (329), *parental leave* (251), *parental education* (199), *parental notification* (178), *parental permission* (165), *parental controls* (159), *parental authority* (142), *parental supervision* (139), *parental responsibility* (133), *parental abduction* (132), *parental care* (131)

The adjective *parental* refers to the subject of the event denoted by the deverbal nouns *consent, support*, *control*, *permission*, *supervision*, *abduction,* and *care* in (11). Morever, the subject-type reading is observable for this relational adjective in the overwhelming majority of the remaining AN sequences under consideration, which are headed either by suffixal nouns (in 12a) or by affixless deverbal nouns (in 12b).

(12) a. *parental acceptance*, *parental approval*, *parental behaviour*, *parental drinking*, *parental expectations*, *parental guidance*, *parental kidnapping*, *parental monitoring*, *parental nurturance*, *parental participation*, *parental pressure*, *parental rejection*, *parental smoking*
b. *parental abuse*, *parental advice*, *parental influence*, *parental neglect*

While the non-head in AN complex nominals is not expected to have the object-type reading (see Rainer 2013), the relational adjective in the following *parental*+NOUN combinations in (11), with a large number of examples in COCA, is object-referencing: *parental involvement*, *parental education*, and *parental notification*.

The expression *parental support* usually exhibits the subject-type reading of the relational adjective (i.e., support given by the parent) (see 13a), yet some examples can be found in COCA in which *parental* denotes the object of the action (13b).

(13) a. *While 75 percent of transgender young people without parental support said they were depressed, only 15 percent of those who had parental support reported symptoms of depression.*
b. *Does membership in parental support organizations or receipt of professional interventions, where parents receive emotional and instrumental support and encouragement to take on a proactive advocacy role for their child, have an impact on their affect, coping strategies, and SOC?*

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The adjective *parental* in *parental alienation* is prepositional-object referencing, since the whole expression refers to a behavioural disorder when a child is alienated from one of the parents after their divorce. Similarly, *parental attachment* can be treated as having a prepositional-object referencing non-head element, as is implied by the paraphrase *Parents are attached to their children*. In the strings *parental rights, parental authority*, and *parental responsibility* the relational adjective can be interpreted as 'pertaining to a parent' or 'belonging to a parent', hence the implicit semantic relation between the constituents of such AN units can be expressed by means of the predicate HAVE (Levi 1978) and the semantic function of POSSESSION (Bourque 2014; Pepper & Arnaud 2020).

4.3 Comparing selected NN and AN units

Let us examine some pairs consisting of NN and AN units that have both been attested fairly frequently in COCA.

(14) a. *parent support* (100) – *parental support* (387),
b. *parent involvement* (663) – *parental involvement* (854),
c. *parent participation* (91) – *parental participation* (79)

The higher frequency of *parental support*, in comparison to *parent support*, may be due to the speaker's preference for signalling clearly the intended interpretation of the parent as the Agent. As was mentioned in Section 4.2, the majority of pre-heads in the *parental*+NOUN combinations with a high number of attestations in COCA are subject-referencing. This can be further exemplified by phrases in which the relational adjective *parental* is followed by the head noun and by the genitive *of*-phrase which indicates the object of the action, as in *parental support of games*.

The fact that *parental involvement* is a very frequent expression in COCA may come as a slight surprise, since the adjective denotes here the internal argument of the event. However, it is possible to argue that it is a subject-referencing AN expression if one employs the sentential paraphrase *Parents get involved (in school life*). The implicit semantic relation between the constituents of NN or AN expressions in (14b) is thus similar to the relation between *parent* (or *parental*) and the head *participation* in (14c). Moreover, as is observed by Malicka-Kleparska (1988: 109-129), selected *-ment* nominals (related to psychological movement verbs) can be treated as derived from passive verb forms. Such an assumption makes it possible to treat *parental* as denoting the subject of the state (or of the passive event) not only in *parental involvement* but also in, among others, *parental attachment* (35 hits in COCA), *parental engagement* (17), *parental bereavement* (7), *parental commitment* (5), or *parental disappointment* (5).

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Certain NN compounds and AN combinations allow the same interpretation but differ considerably in the frequency of their occurrence in COCA.

(15) a. *parent notification* (12) – *parental notification* (178)
b. *parent guidance* (2) – *parental guidance* (123)
c. *parent permission* (18) – *parental permission* (165)

In the case of both *parent notification* and *parental notification* the non-heads denote the Patient/Theme participant, as is illustrated in (16).

(16) a. *Administration approval and parent notification took place prior to the study.*
b. *Anyway, we know she wasn't 18, because Georgia requires parental notification for a minor to obtain an abortion*

Although one could expect a higher frequency of the NN compound (since *parent* is interpreted as the object of the action), *parental notification* prevails as a fixed (legal) term, particularly when it refers to the abortion policy in the United States. It could be added that *parental* occurs in a number of AN expressions in COCA, which belong to specialized legal terminology, e.g., *parental guidance, parental leave*, *parental home, parental abduction, parental permission, parental rights*. This confirms Rainer's (2013: 28) observation that in the Western European languages (including English) many denominal adjectives belong to the formal register. Corresponding NN combinations are not attested in COCA (e.g., ??*parent leave*) or they are exemplified by fewer examples, such as *parent guidance* and *parent permission*.

The meanings of NN and AN combinations may overlap partly. For instance, both *parental ratings* and *parent ratings* refer to some kind of measure used in assessing the influence of parents on child problems (such as stammering), or in estimating the parents' awareness of those problems. *Parental rating* is additionally used to denote parental guidance concerning the suitability of films for children of various age groups.

Let us close the discussion by mentioning some *parent*+NOUN root compounds which have no corresponding *parental*+NOUN combinations.

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Attributive-appositional root compounds whose elements are linked by the implicit predicate BE (Levi 1978), and which are interpretable as 'N1 is (like) N2' or 'N1 serves as N2' (Bourque 2014; Pepper & Arnaud 2020), generally lack corresponding AN phrasal nouns. Hypothetical AN expressions ??*parental company*, ??*parental star,* and ??*parental plant* do not occur as replacements for the institutionalized NN compounds *parent company*, *parent star*, and *parent plant*.

Coordinate NN compounds, such as *parent volunteers*, do not (on the whole) possess synonymous AN phrasal nouns. There are only two instances of *parental volunteers* and one example of *parental volunteer* in COCA, as illustrated by the sentence *The success of any Head Start program depends on the involvement of parental volunteers during the day*. This contrasts with 77 hits *for parent volunteers* and 34 hits for the singular form *parent volunteer*.

Exocentric coordinate NN compounds which cannot appear as independent nouns but which form complex modifiers of NNN compounds, such as *parent teacher conference*, cannot be replaced by AN combinations, as is shown by the unacceptability of ??*parental teacher conference*.

5. Conclusions

Although there does not exist a one-to-one correspondence between the type of multi-word expressions and the semantic link between their constituents, the investigation of selected groups of noun-noun compounds and adjective-noun phrasal nouns in English has shown some discernible tendencies in their interpretation.

The left-hand constituent of synthetic *parent*+NOUN compounds exhibits the preference for the object-type interpretation. However, the meaning of *parent* combined with encyclopaedic knowledge, the cultural context, and/or the discourse context of an utterance can foster its interpretation as the subject of the event denoted by the deverbal head. The occurrence of subject-referencing pre-heads in synthetic *parent*+NOUN compounds is not determined by the type of the head. It can be either a non-affixal (zero-derived) noun, as in *parent consent*, or a suffixal deverbal noun, as in *parent participation*.

As for *parental*+NOUN phrasal lexemes headed by non-affixal or suffixal deverbal nouns, e.g., *parental care*, *parental permission*, and *parental guidance*, they frequently contain subject-referencing left-hand constituents. However, the interpretation of such components as referring to the object (of the action) is not excluded. This can give rise to the synonymy of selected adjective-noun and noun-noun combinations, such as *parental notification* and *parent notification*. The availability

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of both the object-reading and the subject-reading of the pre-head constituent in such multi-word expressions is the reason why some of them are polysemous, e.g., *parent support* and *parental support*.

In addition to being treated as synthetic multi-word units, selected adjective-noun combinations and noun-noun compounds headed by deverbal nouns can be interpreted by means of covert semantic predicates or semantic functions that have been proposed for root compounds. For instance, *parental leave* can be regarded as a phrasal noun with a subject-referencing pre-head (cf. *Parents leave their jobs temporarily to take care of their children*), as an adjective-noun expression whose constituents are linked by the covert predicate FOR (i.e., a leave for parents), or as an adjective-noun unit which can be paraphrased by means of the predicate HAVE (i.e., a leave that parents are entitled to have). This type of semantic promiscuity is exhibited also by noun-noun compounds, such as *parent organization*.

When comparing members of noun-noun and adjective-noun pairs, I have pointed out that, in spite of being roughly synonymous, they may exhibit differences in their level of formality (since adjective-noun units may belong to specialized legal vocabulary). Moreover, their range of meanings may show partial overlap rather than identity (as in the case of *parent ratings* and *parental ratings*).

I have identified noun-noun compound types, which do not undergo replacement by adjective-noun phrasal lexemes. They include exocentric coordinate compounds, which occur as pre-head constituents in complex compound nouns (e.g., *parent teacher* in *parent teacher meetings*). Noun-noun compounds which, similarly to coordinate compounds, call for the predicate BE in their interpretation but which belong to the attributive-appositive class are not likely to be replaced by adjective-noun phrasal nouns, either. This was shown by the infelicity of ??*parental company* when compared to the institutionalized compound *parent company*.

Furthermore, the analysis presented in Section 4 has confirmed the view that when examining implicit semantic links between constituents of compound nouns or phrasal nouns, it is useful to focus on families of such multi-word units.

List of abbreviations

AN – adjective-noun
COCA – the Corpus of Contemporary American English (=Davies 2008)
NN – noun-noun

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RA – relational adjective

RDP – Recoverably Deletable Predicate

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Résumé

The purpose of this article is to find discernible tendencies in the choice English speakers make between the use of noun-noun compounds and adjective-noun phrasal lexemes. Therefore, an analysis of the most common *parent*+NOUN and *parental*+NOUN combinations is carried out based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English. Implicit semantic links are examined between the constituents of those multi-word expressions. Particular attention is given to the possibility of the object-type reading or the subject-type reading of the left-most elements of such units headed by deverbal nouns. While the choice of the noun-noun construction often corresponds to the object-type reading and the adjective-noun construction correlates with the subject-type (i.e., agentive) reading of the pre-head constituent, examples are given of polysemous multi-word units which allow both interpretations. It is shown that world knowledge, cultural context, and sentential context can influence the meaning of a given noun-noun or adjective-noun combination. It is emphasized that English compound nouns and phrasal nouns are promiscuous, since several implicit predicates or semantic functions can be used to explicate the sense of a multi-word expression. It is pointed out that attributive-appositive compounds do not have corresponding adjective-noun equivalents. This is also demonstrated to be true of coordinate noun-noun compounds which cannot occur in isolation but which function as complex pre-head constituents of larger compounds. Semantic investigations carried out in the paper proved relevant for the study of compounds or phrasal lexemes, which share a common constituent. This confirms the adequacy of paradigmatic approach to the semantic analysis of multi-word lexemes.

Key words: noun-noun compounds, adjective-noun combinations, compound semantics, synthetic compounds.

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