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## SOME FEATURES OF COMPOUND ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH NEWS ARTICLES

**Abstract:** The paper examines some linguistic features of compound adjectives used in news articles in the English language. Due to the fact that articles as well as their headlines are especially abundant with compound words, they constitute a valuable source of research materials in this regard. Word formation is an essential part of English lexicology; it studies how the new words are created in the language. English language is characterized by various types of word formation processes and one of the significant one is compounding. Compounding is the process of creating new lexical units by combining two or more stems. In our study we aimed to examine and analyze some characteristic features of compound adjectives in present-day English texts, namely in economy-related news articles; to discuss some phonological, orthographical, semantic and morphological peculiarities of compound words and especially compound adjectives. This paper presents the findings from our study: the structure of the constituent stems of compound adjectives as well as some common and prevalent adjective compounding patterns found in English economy-related news articles.

**Key words:** compounding, compound adjectives, economic news articles.

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

Word formation is an essential part of English lexicology; it studies how the new words are created in the language. English language is characterized by various types of word formation processes and one of the significant one is compounding. Compounding means combining two or more stems for the purpose of creating a new lexical unit. According to Crystal

(2008), compound words consist of "...two or more free morphemes, as in such 'compound nouns' as bedroom, rainfall and washing machine" (p.97). Similarly, in *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* a compound word is defined as "a combination of two or more words which functions as a single word. For example self-made (a compound adjective) as in He was a self-

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made man and flower shop (a compound noun) as in "They went to the flower shop." (Richards, & Schmidt, 2002, pp.98-99).

In our study we aimed to examine and analyze some characteristic features of compound adjectives in present-day English texts, namely in economy-related news articles. Due to the fact that articles as well as their headlines are especially abundant with compound words, they constitute a valuable source of research materials.

When we are studying compound words, first of all, it is crucial to discuss the criteria that classify lexical units as compound words. Linguists identify several criteria, for example, phonetic, graphic, semantic, morphological, and syntactic for determining compound words. (Vishnyakova, 2010; Arnold, 1986). In most cases, no one type of criteria is sufficient for determining a compound word. Instead, the use of several types is needed.

**Phonetically** compound words are marked by three stress patterns — a unity stress, a double stress and a level stress. The first two are more common stress patterns in compounds. With regard to compound adjectives, as Plag (2010) mentions the stress criterion for determining the status of compound adjectives is not as important as it is in case of nominal compounds because here, we have varied stress patterns whose source is not clear. "...adjectival compounds show both leftward and rightward stress. For example, all copulative adjectival compounds, and compounds like knee-deep, bone-dry, dog-tired, top-heavy are all stressed on the final element, but other formations have initial stress: footloose, threadbare." (Plag, 2010, p.154).

**Graphically** compound words can be:

- **solid**, spelled as one word - for example: *dealmaking, groundbreaking, etc.*
- **hyphenated** - for example: *foreign-exchange, high-yield, etc.*
- **open**, spelled as two words - for example: *Bull market, real estate, etc.*

"Compound words are written either as a single word (e.g. headache), as hyphenated words (e.g. self-government), or as two words (e.g. police station)." (Richards, & Schmidt, 2002, p.99).

The compound adjectives analyzed in our study are marked by two types of spelling - solid and hyphenated the latter being the most prevalent one.

With regard to the **semantic** aspect of compounds, some linguists distinguish **idiomatic** and **non-idiomatic** compounds based on the correlations of the separate meanings of the constituent parts and the actual meaning of the compound. (Vishnyakova, 2010, p.36). In case of idiomatic compounds one of the components (or both) has changed its meaning. Therefore, the meaning of a compound do not correspond or cannot be deduced from its constituents. For instance, *dog-faced, ham-fisted, groundbreaking*. In these compound adjectives

meaning of the whole unit cannot be defined as the sum of the constituent meanings. In non-idiomatic compounds meanings can be described as the sum of their constituent meanings, for example, *fixed-rate, rich-world, etc.*

From the **structural** point of view, linguists distinguish three types of compound words: neutral, morphological and syntactic.

1. **Neutral** compounds are composed by mere juxtaposition, without the use of any linking elements. For instance: *credit card, rich-world, etc.*

There are three subtypes depending on the structure of the constituent stems: **simple neutral compounds** consisting of simple affixless stems: *flat-tax, long-range, high-yield, stock-market*; **derived or derivational compounds** which have affixes in their structure: *mortgage-backed, fixed-rate, pandemic-induced, tight-fisted, long-dated*; and **contracted** compounds which have a shortened (contracted) stem in their structure. For example: *tech-heavy*.

2. The two stems of the **morphological** compounds are combined by a linking vowel or consonant. For example: *handiwork, spokesman, statesman*. This type is few in number and is considered to be non-productive.

3. **Syntactic** compounds often have linking elements represented by preposition or conjunction stems; their components are placed in the order that resembles the order of words in free phrases arranged according to the rules of syntax. For example: *lily-of-the-valley, good-for-nothing, know-all, etc.*

From the point of view of the part of speech of its constituents, we can distinguish the following patterns of compound adjectives:

- a. **Noun + adjective**: *card-carrying; childproof*
  - b. **Verb + adjective**: *fail safe*
  - c. **Adjective + adjective**: *open-ended*
  - d. **Adverb + adjective**: *cross-modal*
  - e. **Particle + adjective**: *over-qualified*
  - f. **Noun + noun**: *coffee-table*
  - g. **Verb + noun**: *roll-neck*
  - h. **Adjective + noun**: *red-brick; blue-collar*
  - i. **Particle + noun**: *in-depth*
  - j. **Verb + verb**: *go-go; make-believe*
  - k. **Adjective/Adverb + verb**: *high-rise*
  - l. **Verb + particle**: *see-through; tow-away*
- (Delahunty, & Garvey, 2010, p. 134).

### Methodology

Materials for analysis were collected from the following issues of *The Economist*:

- October 1ST–7TH 2022
- October 8TH–14TH 2022
- October 15TH–21ST 2022
- October 22ND–28TH 2022
- October 29TH–NOVEMBER 4TH 2022

We have selected "The Economist" for our study because it has a dedicated section on Finance and Economics.

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A total number of **30** articles from Finance and Economics section were analyzed in our study. We have identified **80** units of compound adjectives for further analysis.

### Analysis and results

Modern economic news articles are abundant with various types of compound adjectives. In our study we have identified six patterns of compound adjectives: *adjective + noun*, *noun + verb*, *noun + adjective*, *noun + noun*, *adjective + adjective*, *adjective/adverb + verb*.

**1. Adjective + Noun:** this is the largest group of compound adjectives found in our research data. With regard to the structure of the constituent stems, we can identify **simple neutral compounds** consisting of simple affixless stems as well as **derived/derivational compounds**.

Examples of simple neutral compound adjectives:

- **short-term** - *Short-term* interest rates rose just as spectacularly.
- **foreign-exchange** - *China's central bank is requiring banks to post reserves when selling foreign-exchange derivatives contracts, making it harder to bet against the yuan.*
- **private-market** - *Another worry stems from the roughly \$24trn in private-market assets, which have ballooned over the past decade.*
- **high-yield** - *Yields on riskier high-yield, or "junk", corporate bonds have more than doubled in America and the euro area, to 9.4% and 7.8% respectively.*
- **flat-tax** - *Ukraine's flat-tax system, designed to make the country an attractive place to invest in normal times...*
- **rich-world** - *Rich-world government spending on subsidies and transfers, such as welfare benefits, has grown inexorably, as politicians help companies that are struggling and compensate households who they deem to have had a raw deal.*
- **real-world** - *It empowers programme directors to finance high-risk, high-reward projects with a bent towards real-world use.*
- **long-range** - *Terrestrial weaponry like vehicles and long-range missiles have been lower-priority.*
- **blank-cheque** - *Special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs), blank-cheque vehicles which raise money by listing on a stockmarket, are a distant memory.*
- **old-school** - *If they must be shown the door, at least let them leave with a little old-school swagger.*
- **hard-luck** - *A hard-luck story*
- **single-firm** - *More than half of single-firm credit-default swaps and two-thirds of index ones are*

*now cleared, compared with 6% and 16% in mid 2010.*

- **clean-energy** - *So why did a solar punk future of clean-energy abundance fail to arrive in the 1970s?*
- **medium-term** - *Mr. Kwarteng has said he will clarify his medium-term fiscal plans on November 23rd. If he is to save the pound, he may need to bring forward his fiscal clock.*
- **current-account** - *And given the size of Britain's current-account deficit and the pace of its inflation, the diminished pound is not obviously weaker than it should be.*
- **new-look** - *The current tension is the first big test of a new-look financial system.*
- **hard-currency** - *Yet reserves are most valuable in the thick of a crisis, when they can be used to pay for critical imports and meet hard-currency debt repayments.*

In **derivational compounds** we can distinguish compound adjectives whose first constituent element is: a derived adjective with suffix *-al*. For example: a **natural-gas** crisis; **central-bank** governors; or participle stem. For example:

- **floating-rate** - *Charles Bendit of Taconic Partners, a developer in New York, notes that lots have opted for floating-rate debt, meaning their debt-servicing costs have already doubled.*
- **emerging-markets** - *Where writers would normally pencil in an emerging-markets crisis, there is instead an eerie calm.*
- **guided-missile** - *Javelin missiles, HIMARS guided-missile launchers and GMLRS rockets, known as "gimmlers", have become household names on TV and social media.*
- **fixed-rate** - *In America the interest rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage has risen to 6.9%, the highest since the financial crisis.*

Derivational compounds consisting of simple stems as their first constituents and derived nouns with suffix *-ion* as their second constituent: "**low-inflation** regime", "**high-inflation** regime".

Derivational adjective compounds whose both constituents are derived: **financial-stability** report.

**2. Noun + Verb:** for example, a **health-care** provider. This is the second most common pattern according to our research data. A vast majority of compound adjectives in this type consists of a **noun stem** and a **participle stem**:

- **breathtaking** - *In Britain sterling took a breathtaking dive, aided by the government's decision to unveil the country's largest tax cuts since the 1970s.*
- **groundbreaking** - *But though it has proved successful in the defence industry - funding groundbreaking technologies from the early internet to GPS - it may not be quite as successful elsewhere.*

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- **dealmaking** - **Dealmaking** revenues at the largest banks are down by almost half this year, and pipelines are nowhere near full.

- **rate-raising** - **Rate-raising** central banks set out to slow growth by dampening spending, but in a globalized economy spending flows across borders.

- **bond-buying** - The Bank of Japan (BOJ), the pioneer of modern zero-interest rate and **bond-buying** operations, is standing firm.

- **fuel-saving** - Environmental economists call this phenomenon—where **fuel-saving** measures perversely raise demand—the “rebound effect”.

- **debt-servicing** - ... meaning their **debt-servicing** costs have already doubled.

- **eye-watering** - Bankers involved in the buy-out of Citrix, an American technology firm, are finding this out while offloading debt to the market at an **eye-watering** loss.

- **market-opening** - ... “extremely well qualified, highly intelligent, and with a strong commitment to **market-opening** reforms”.

- **risk-taking** - They have done this by compelling firms designated as such to follow stringent capital, liquidity and **risk-taking** rules, as well as by stress-testing them in hypothetical economic breakdowns.

- **tax-cutting** - ...the shredding of a vast unfunded **tax-cutting** package that set the fiasco in motion.

- **crisis-related** - In this period, America spent 3.5% of GDP on **crisis-related** bail-outs, including capital infusions for banks and mortgage lenders, according to Deborah Lucas of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

- **war-related** - According to Elina Ribakova of the Institute of International Finance, an industry group, it implies large increases in **war-related** spending in the coming years, particularly on internal “security”.

We have quite a large number of compound adjectives in this pattern with both constituent elements being derived:

- **inflation-fighting** - The European Central Bank, eager to shore up its **inflation-fighting** credibility, has signaled that...

- **inflation-targeting** - Central banks are more independent, and have adopted the **inflation-targeting** approaches used in the rich world.

- **information-gathering** - The uncertainties inherent to lending and borrowing mean that such decisions require “**information-gathering** services”.

- **productivity-enhancing** - “I don’t think many people harbour the illusion that he’s going to unleash a wave of **productivity-enhancing** economic reforms with drive and vigour,”...

- **liability-driven** - They use a strategy called “**liability-driven** investing” to hedge against interest-rate moves.

- **curiosity-driven** - DARPA models, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s **curiosity-driven** method, and even handing out grants by lottery, as the New Zealand Health Research Council has tried, all have their uses.

- **pandemic-induced** - He was appointed in April 2021, a year after the Treasury market—the world’s most important financial market - seized up during a **pandemic-induced** dash for cash.

There are a few compound adjectives which contain another compound word as their constituent elements. For instance: **Nobel-prizewinning** economist; **rate-shock driven**.

**3. Noun + Adjective:** Our study showed that this pattern is also common in English economy-related news articles. Compound adjectives created by this pattern include compounds consisting of various stems:

Compound consisting of two simple stems:

- **sky-high** - What if, in a year’s time, Europe’s energy prices remain **sky-high**?

- **capital-light** - Suisse, which has long punched above its weight in lending to risky companies, will learn the true price of its advice if it fully commits to offering a “**capital-light**, advisory-led” investment bank.

- **risk-free** - Some \$640bn of government bonds change hands each day, at prices that become the benchmark **risk-free** rate by which all financial instruments are valued and lending rates set.

Compounds whose first element is a simple stem and the second one is derived by the following adjective-forming suffixes: **-ive** and **-ed**:

- **interest-sensitive** - Rising rates are making a dent in the property market, the most **interest-sensitive** part of the economy.

- **labour-intensive** - This shift matters for the job market because services tend to be more **labour-intensive**.

- **dog-faced** - Compared with the air force, the army has historically been seen as “just a bunch of **dog-faced** soldiers trudging in the mud”, he growls.

- **mortgage-backed** - Homeowners across America defaulted on their loans, meaning **mortgage-backed** securities, assets many firms had bought, were no longer worth anything close to their original purchase price.

- **defence-orientated** - Indeed, other work by Mr. Azoulay and colleagues notes that although arpa, an energy-focused outfit launched in 2009, is still in its relatively early days, it is yet to produce advances on a par with its defence-orientated predecessor.

- **risk-weighted** - These 28 banks are funded with capital worth 13% of their **risk-weighted** Assets and have debt worth five times their equity.

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- **sure-footed** - What is less clear is where the bottom of the staircase lies, and how **sure-footed** the descent will be.

- **ham-fisted** - These include a **ham-fisted** crackdown on China's successful technology firms and the promotion of "common prosperity" by browbeating billionaires.

In this type of compound adjectives we have also identified a contracted compound which has a shortened/clipped stem in its structure: **tech-heavy** - The Golden Dragon index of Chinese companies listed on the **tech-heavy** Nasdaq, which includes giants like Alibaba and Baidu, fell at one point by 20%, reaching levels last seen before Mr. Xi took power ten years ago.

Compound adjective which contains another compound word as its constituent element: **staircase-shaped** - Yet it is similar enough that economists at Hamburg University have called it a **staircase-shaped** "moving Krugman band system".

4. **Noun + Noun**: compounds created by this pattern do not seem to be as numerous as the above-mentioned ones but they are also common. All of the compound adjectives in this group consist of two simple noun stems:

- **student-loan** - In August President Joe Biden announced that he would spend hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out Americans holding **student-loan** debt.

- **Credit-default** - Although Credit Suisse **credit-default** swaps, which act like insurance against default, have leapt, they still suggest the chance of default is in the low to mid-single digits.

- **credit-card** - ... with which consumers have been able to tap **credit-card** lines.

- **stock-market** - Corporate profits also look set to flag - one reason for the recent **stock-market** plunge.

- **labour-market** - Continued **labour-market** tightness therefore inclines the central bank towards a tougher, longer bout of monetary tightening.

- **venture-capital** - Plentiful **venture-capital** funding allowed them to launch into foreign markets, make bold acquisitions and hire the best staff.

- **supply-chain** - Locals report few signs of a surge in Ukraine-related production, not least because the industry is suffering from the same post-pandemic hangover of rising inflation, **supply-chain** strains and labour shortages as the rest of American manufacturing.

- **rock-bottom** - **Rock-bottom** mortgage rates and constrained supply fuelled a steady rise in rich-world house prices in the decade after the global financial crisis of 2007, 09.

- **wage-price** - Indeed, some hawks worry about a **wage-price** spiral, in which workers demand higher pay to cover rising prices, as firms raise prices to cover rising wage bills.

## 5. Adjective + Adjective: **military-industrial** machine

Compounds with derived adjectives by the suffix **-ed** as their second constituent element seem to be the most dominant ones:

- **long-dated** - On September 28th the Bank of England stepped in, saying it would purchase **long-dated** gilts to restore order.

- **open-ended** - On October 4th the IMF sounded the alarm about **open-ended** bonds funds, which hold \$41trn in assets, a quarter of financial assets outside the banking system.

- **tight-fisted** - If Ukrainian ministers were to take some more tough decisions, **tight-fisted** Europeans would have one less excuse for failing to pay up.

- **old-fashioned** - They run the infrastructure that moves money around at a time when the dominant "rails" remain costly (think of those 3% credit card fees) and **old-fashioned** firms want to build their digital storefront - the logic that underpinned the fintech boom.

6. **Adjective/Adverb + Verb**: this is the last adjective compounding pattern found in our study. The common subtype consists of an **adjective stem** and a **participle stem**. For example:

- **public-spending** - We examined **public-spending** data from Britain, looking at whether actual spending by government departments came in higher or lower than originally budgeted.

- **fast-growing** - For decades, **fast-growing** middle-income countries have been a source of financial trouble.

- **solar-heating** - Its copious insulation and **solar-heating** system kept it warm even in frigid Danish winters.

- **formidable-looking** - It would have been easy to conclude that Mr. Xi was truly committed to economic reform and was lining up a **formidable-looking** team to carry it out.

## Conclusion

The purpose of our study was to identify some of the linguistic features characteristic to compound adjectives used in modern economic news articles. Based on our study findings, we can point out that various types of compound adjectives are widely used in economic news. The most common adjective compounding patterns are: **adjective + noun**, **noun + verb and noun + adjective**. Both types of compound adjectives: compounds consisting of two simple stems and compounds consisting of one simple and one derived stem are prevalent. Compounds with much more complex compositions are very few in number. As for the orthographic point of view, compound adjectives are spelled either solid or hyphenated; the latter being the most common and typical for news articles in the English language.

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