

The Lexical Frame of English Social Terms

Compounding

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Abstract

Social terms form categories created by human society, unlike natural kind terms which exist in nature independently of institutional frames [3, 4]. They are interrelated and disposed in systems denoting ranks in a social hierarchy. Like natural terms (man, tiger etc), social rank terms undergo word-formation processes (compounding, derivation, conversion). In this paper I will examine compounding, highlighting the productivity of terms in forming compounds. In the case of compounding, productivity [6, 7] refers to how many compounds a word may create. The richness of their lexical frame helps us identify which social rank terms are central in the frame when the evolution in time is considered. I also assume the systematic character of the lexical frame of English social terms [4, 5]. Specifically, I expect that semantically related words undergo parallel semantic changes in the constitution of their paradigms.

Keywords

endocentric compounds, appositional compounds, prototypical members, systematicity

I. The **aim** of this paper is to present a particular aspect of the lexical frame of English social rank terms, namely *compounding*, by examining the *productivity*¹ of terms in forming compounds. I also assume the *systematic character of the lexical frame* of English social terms [4, 5]. Specifically, we expect that semantically related words undergo parallel semantic changes in the constitution of their paradigms.

My **hypothesis** is that words which have a rich lexical family may be considered to be central and thus prototypical in the frame.

The criterion for the selection of terms is the diachronic dimension. Social terms are studied from the perspective of the medieval society when they were constituted, following their evolution until nowadays. The chosen terms designate all social ranks in the feudal system which was like a pyramid of power.

¹ Applied to compounding, the concept of productivity which is usually used for derivation [6, 7] refers to how many compounds a word may create.

A. High social rank terms: *baron, baroness, duke, duchess, earl, king, knight, noble, prince, princess, queen, marquis, marquise, viscount, viscountess;*

B. Lower social rank terms: *bailiff, blackguard, boor, churl, clown, constable, footman, knave, lackey (laquey), marshal, page, peasant, serf, sergeant, servant, slave, squire, vassal, vavassour, villain.*

II. Theoretical framework

Two or more free morphemes which combine form a compound. The characteristics of compounds are:

- a) Compounds are endocentric constructions;
- b) They are based on a relation of hyponymy (the compound as a whole is a hyponym of the head): the set of entities denoted by the compound (e.g. *catfood*) is a subset of the entities denoted by the head (e.g. *food*);
- c) They are right-headed, inheriting their major semantic and syntactic properties from their heads [1, 7]: if the head is a verb, the compound will be a verb (e.g. *deep-fry*);
- d) The elements of a compound have relations to each other: predicate-argument (*truck-driving, drawbridge*), head-modifier (*file-cabinet, greenhouse*) and apposition (*mother-child*).

Social terms create *endocentric* compounds where the relation between the two elements is that of *attribute-head*. **A social term can be either head or attribute in a compound.** According to this, compounds fall into two major categories: ***attribute-social term compounds*** and ***social term-head compounds***.

III. Compounds formed with social terms

3.1. Attribute-social term compounds

This category includes *nominal compounds* in which the social term is *head* or *centre* of the construction. The semantic contribution of the head may change according to whether it is interpreted *literally* or *figuratively*.

3.1.1. The compound denotes *subtypes* of the *head category*

In these compounds, the social term has a *literal meaning*. The definitions of compounds are given as registered in OED (1989).

Baron: *court baron, Chief Baron* (the president of the judges of the Court of Exchequer) (OED: I: 964)

Constable: *High Constable* (an officer of a hundred or other large administrative district, appointed to act as conservator of the peace within his district and to perform various other duties (abolished in 1869) ; *Lord High Constable* (one of the chief functionaries in the English royal household having duties and powers similar to those of the same officer in France. Together with the Earl Marshal he was the judge of the Court of Chivalry. In early times his powers of jurisdiction were extensive); *Petty/Parish Constable* (an officer of a parish or township appointed to act as conservator of the peace and to perform a number of administrative duties in his district (abolished in 1872); (now) a police constable; *Special Constable* (a person appointed to establish justice and peace when the force of the other constables to preserve the peace is insufficient) ;(now) a chief police officer (OED: III: 784).

(1) 1613 *Shakes. Hen.VIII II, I When I came hither I was Lord High Constable, and Duke of Buckingham, new poore, Edward Bohun* (OED: III:784).

Duke: *grand duke, royal duke* (a duke who is a member of the royal family, taking precedence of the other dukes; after the great feudatory dukes of France became the greatest nobles of the country, the title was imitated in England. In England it was introduced by Edward III, who in 1337 created the Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall)(OED:V:23)

Duchess: *great/grand duchess* (the wife of a grand duke) (no longer in use);

Knight: *priest knight (a knight who is also a priest);*

Marshal: *High Marshal; Lord Marshal; king's marshal* (in the Middle Ages, one of the chief functionaries of a royal household or court, usually entrusted with the military affairs of his sovereign);

Sergeant: *king's sergeant* (proclaims and publishes all orders of the governor or of the Court), *common serjeant* (a judicial officer appointed by the corporation of London as an assistant to the Recorder) (OED:..XII:9)

(2) 1419 *Liber Albus (Rolls) I.47 Le...Commune Sergeaunt de ley, qui autrement est dit Commune Countour* (OED:XII:9)

Servant: *public/civil servant* (applied to any state official, as expressing his relation to the Sovereign);

Sheriff: *deputy sheriff* (a royal officer authorized to maintain order and peace in a county in the absence of a sheriff), *under-sheriff, vice-sheriff*;

(3) 1450 Paston Lett. I 125 *The shreve of Kent... sent his undershreve to the juges (...)* (OED: XII: 246)

Squire: *village squire;*

Vassal: *great vassal* (in direct relation to the king), *rear vassal* (serves a vassal).

The interpretation of the nominal compound *court baron*:

[[chief]A [baron] N] N

In this compound, the general distributional class of *chief baron* is the same as that of *baron*. *Chief* is the attribute and *baron* is the head of the construction, its structural properties being inherited by the whole construction. *Baron* and *chief baron* have the same distributional properties. The compound is a *hyponym* of the head which is explained by the fact that *chief baron* is a *type of baron*.

3.1.2. *The head creates compounds with a metaphorical denotation*

The social term undergoes a sense extension from the social field to the fields of:

a) *Commerce and industry*: *beef baron*, *coal baron*, *mahogany baron*, *silver baron*, *fur king*, *railway king*, (a magnate in commerce, finance or the like; a great merchant in certain commodity, usually defined by a qualifying word);

(5) 1904 “O. Henry” *Cabbages Kings*, *A rubber prince*, *a sarsaparilla*, *indigo and mahogany baron*” (OED: I: 964)

b) *Entertainment*: *rock king*, *Majesty’s servants*;

By means of semantic extensions, *the social term becomes an evaluative term*. The attribute signals this change by specifying the semantic sphere of extension. E.g. *coal baron* = a compound having undergone a semantic change and being used to designate a magnate in *industry*.

The compounds *churl-king* (some kind of a leader of the peasant class) and *Majesty’s servants* (in the XVIth century, certain companies of actors described themselves as the ‘servants’ of some noble patron; somehow jocularly used), *apple-squire* (contemptuous use: *a pimp*, *a kept gallant*, *an impostor*), *trencher-squire* (a *parasite*) have a *pejorative* meaning, being contemptuously and jocularly used.

(6) J. W. S. Gouley (1907), *Dining and Its Amenities* “ *This honest friend, that you so much admire, No better is than a mere trencher squire*” (OED: XVI:421).

A special compound is *Irish Blackguard* which designates a kind of snuff and has an interesting history of formation. The story runs that a Dublin snuff merchant, when a boy, made a mistake in the preparation of some snuff, for which his master called him an “Irish blackguard”; the mistake turned out to be a fortunate one and the snuff obtained the name given to its author (OED:II:247).

3.2. Social term-head compounds

There are two major categories of compounds in which the social term is in the attribute position: **nominal compounds** and **verbal compounds**.

A) *Noun-noun compounds (*king-fern, queen cake*)

***Noun’s-noun compounds/ genitive compounds** (*king’s stroke, king’s cup, king’s chair*).

The semantic contribution of the social term to the head is *evaluative* and *attributive*.

3.2.1. Compounds in which the social term has an evaluative function

These compounds designate *a special kind* of the category of plants, animals, food and drink. The social term *qualifies* the compound, adding an *evaluative* meaning and it creates *subtypes/hyponyms of the same category*. The meaning added to the compound is either *ameliorative* or *pejorative*, depending on the social rank the social terms designates [4].

3.2.1.1. Compounds with an **ameliorative meaning**:

a) *Birds*: *king-bird* (a species of bird of **paradise**), *king-crow* (the **leader** of a flock of crows), *king-duck* (a **large** and **handsome** duck), *king-vulture*.

b) *Insects*: *king-bee* (the queen-bee), *king-wasp* (a queen-wasp), *queen bee* (a fully developed bee), *queen bird* (a swan), *queen’s pigeon* (a large and beautiful crested pigeon),

c) *Fishes*: *king-salmon* (a **large** species of salmon);

d) *Animals*: *king-snake* (a **large** snake), *king-cobra*,

e) *Plants, trees*: *king wood* (a tree giving wood of a **good quality**), *king-apple* (an old variety of apple of red colour and **large size**), *king-pear* (a tasty variety of pear of **large size**), *king-weed* (a troublesome, **big** weed), *king-fern* (the royal fern, a **big** and **beautiful** fern), *king-plant* (a **beautiful** variety of orchid), *prince’s pine* (the Great Pine);

(7) 1707 Mortimer Husb.I (1708) 519 *The King Apple, tho not common, yet is by some esteemed and excellent Apple* (OED: VIII: 445)

f) *Food and drinks*: *prince-dish* (an **exquisite** dish), *queen-olive* (a variety of **large**, **fleshy** olive suitable for pickling), *king-ale* (a **feasting** or ale-drinking on some royal anniversary; the **strongest** ale brewed);

(8) 1618 *Sylvester Wood-man's Bear xxxvii In the Crofte so faire and pleasant harbor of the **Prince-dish** Pheasant* (OED: XII: 492).

There is also a limited number of *noun-adjective* and *noun-noun* compounds that illustrate the *appearance attribute* [2] which defines social terms. These compounds denote *high moral and physical qualities*:

f) *Appearance, skills and manners*: *duchess-like*, *king-like*, *queen-like*, *prince-craft* (the skill or art of a prince or ruler), *prince-worthy*, *noblehead* (metonymic usage, a noble person, a peer) etc

Other compounds: *king-size* (extra **large** size), *king's wand* (a scepter), *king's silver* (silver **blessed** by the king and intended for cramp-rings), *queen's weather* (**fine** weather), etc

(9) 1824 *Miss Mitford Village Ser.I (1863) 52, Her beauty is duchess-like* (OED: IV: 1098).

In these compounds, social terms underwent a sense extension in different semantic fields. Their semantic contribution consists in the positive attributes which the compounds inherit from them: [+ large/big²], [beautiful/handsome], [+ leader].

3.2.1.2. *Compounds which have a pejorative meaning*

These compounds are formed with low social rank terms [4];

E.g. : *bailiff-errant*, *churl-king*, *churl-mind*, *footman-like*, *footman's inn* (a gaol), *knave-fool* (a simple minded person), *knave-grease* (a flogging), *Knight-adventurer/errant* (a knight of medieval romance wandering in search of adventures and opportunities for deeds of bravery and chivalry), by extension, one compared to a knight-errant in respect of a chivalrous or adventurous spirit (sometimes used in ridicule, with allusion to the character and actions of Don Quixote), *peasant-mind*, *peasant-like*, (trivial and slang use), *sheriff's tooth* (cf.' for one's own tooth', an annual impost, complained of in 1327-1377 by Derbyshire tenants as a wrongful exaction, levied by the sheriff on each bovat of land within his country (OED, XII: 247), *slave-morality* (metaphorical use: the morality of the weak people displaying virtues like meekness, obedience towards

² In these compounds, the adjectives *big* and *large* acquire a positive meaning because they are associated with the idea of quality and taste.

the most powerful), *slave-like*, *apple-squire* (*contemptuous use: a pimp, a kept gallant, an impostor*), *trencher-squire* (*a parasite*), *villein-like*.

(10) J. W. S. Gouley(1907), *Dining and Its Amenities* “ *This honest friend, that you so much admire, No better is than a mere trencher squire*”(OED: XVI:421)

(11) 1636 *Knight adventurers are allowed Their pages* (OED: VIII: 493)

(12) 1597 Shakes. 2 Hen. IV, v .iv.24 *Come, come you-shee knight-errant, come* (OED: VIII: 493)

The attributes which the created compounds exhibit are: [+ humbleness], [+ simple-mindedness], [+naivety], [+poverty] [+weakness], [+ debauchery], [+ dishonesty].

3.2.1.3. Compounds which have a **metaphorical** usage

They exhibit a *metaphor-like usage* (*the head undergoes a metaphorical extension in a different semantic field* which is signaled by the attribute).

E.g.: *boor's mustard*, *churl's cress*, *churl's mustard*, *churl's head*, *clown's all-heal*, *clown's mustard*, *clown's lungwort*, *knave's mustard*, *knight's cross*, *knight's milfoil*, *knight's star* (species of plants), *churl's treacle* (a species of garlic), *churl hemp* (cannabis), *king-carp* (a variety of the common carp), *king-mullet* (the goat fish), *king's cup* (lemonade)), *king's English* (the English language), *queen's English* (the standard and correct English, the language considered as under the guardianship of the Queen), *queen's cake* (a heart-shaped currant cake), *sergeant- fish* (a species of fish with stripes like those on the sleeve of a sergeant's uniform), *sergeant-loaf* (some kind of bread), *squire trap* (a soft spot or piece of ground where one may sink while riding after hounds) etc.

3.2.2. **Appositional compounds**

Compounds denoting human beings are predominantly appositional (Plag: 2002, Baciu: 1998). Social terms *specify* the head without adding an *evaluative dimension* to the meaning of the compound. They may create *subtypes* of a category (*peasant-worker*, *peasant-farmer*, *peasant-novelist*). Both members contribute equally to the meaning of the compound.

E.g. *bailiff-peers* (assessors of the bailiff of a town), *baron-bailie* (a bailiff or magistrate appointed by the lord-superior in a burgh of barony), *footman-archer* (out of use), *king-bishop*, *king-brother*, *king-cardinal*, *king-poet*, *king-sovereign*, *king-pope* (that is a king), *knave-child* (a male child)(out of use), *knight-baronet* (a baronet), *knight brother* (a brother in a society or order of knights), *knight-wager* (a mercenary soldier), *knight-bachelor*, *knight-hospitaller* (a military religious order founded about the time of the first crusade, 1096-1099 among European crusaders), *knight-templar*(a member of an order of knights about 1118 to protect pilgrims in Holy Land) (all compounds with *knight* are out of use), *knight-marshal* (XIIth-XIXth a knight responsible for maintaining order in the King's Court), *lackey-boy*, *lackey-slave*, *nobleman*, *noblewoman*, *page-boy*, *peasant-boy*, *peasant-farmer*, *peasant-owner*, *peasant-tenant*, *peasant-woman*, *peasant-worker*(that is a peasant), *Prince Consort* (the husband of a reigning female sovereign being himself a prince), *prince- poet*, *prince-pope*, *prince-priest*, *prince-elect* (*that is a prince*), *prince-regent* (a prince who rules in the absence of the sovereign), *princess regent* (a princess who is regent during the minority or the absence of the nominal sovereign), *princess –nun*, *queen mother*(the widow of a former king who is also the mother of a reigning sovereign), *queen dowager* (the widow of a deceased king), *queen consort* (the wife of a king), *queen regnant* (a queen who rules in her own right and not due to marriage to a king), *queen-widow*, *serf-tenant*, *sergeant-cater*, *sergeant- footman*, *sergeant -plumber*, *sergeant-porter*, *sergeant-surgeon*, *sergeant-cook-*, *sergeant-instructor*, *sergeant-trumpeter* (designations of office in which sergeants are employed), *slave-boy*, *slave-wife*, *slave-labourer*, *squire-beadle* (a minor parish official formerly employed in an English church to keep order during services), *squire fruiterer*, *squire priest*, *squire farmer*.

(13) 1598 *Grenewey Tacitus' Ann XIII, ix* (1622) 192 *In the wings went the footmen archers with the residue of the horses* (OED: VI: 20)

(14) 1175 *Lamb. Hom.77 þu scald...bare Knaue child* (OED: VIII: 484)

(15) 1852 *Dickens, Bleak Ho. Xxi* 307 *Mr. Skimpole....sang one about a Peasant boy* (OED: XI: 403)

(16) 1727 *De Foe Syst. Magic I ii* (1840) 42 *The queen dowager was with child, and would bring forth a prince* (OED: XII: 491).

B) Verbal /synthetic compounds

In such compounds the head is a nominalized verb and the left-hand constituent is interpreted as an *argument* of the deverbal head [1, 6, 7]. Combinatory patterns include: *noun-agent noun* compounds (*slave-catcher*, *knave-seller*), *noun-present participle* compounds (*king-ennobling*, *king-making*) and *noun-past participle* compounds (*noble-spirited*).

1. Noun-agent noun compounds

Social terms specify the head, creating subtypes.

Examples: *king/queen/prince-murderer*, *king/queen-worshipper*, *king/queen-maker*, *knave-seller* (out of use), *slave dealer*, *slave-auctioneer*, *slave-catcher*, *slave-seller*, *slave-driver* (an overseer of slaves), *slave-holder*.

2. Noun-present participle compounds

They are *event compounds* [1]. The relation between the two constituents of such a compound is that of *verb-complement* [6]. In such compounds, social terms specify the head and have a **literal meaning**. Exception: *noble-looking* (metaphorical uses, involves the appearance attribute specific to social terms).

E.g: *king-becoming*, *king-ennobling*, *king-dethroning*, *king-worshipping*, *king-upholding*, *king-making*, *noble-looking*, *peasant-shooting*, *slave-carrying*, *slave-catching*, *slave-collecting*, *slave-dealing*, *slave-holding*, *slave-hunting*, *slave-making*, *slave-driving*(exploitation of slave labour, demand of hard, servile labour),

(17) 1605 *Shakes.Macb. Iv.iii.91 The King-becoming Graces,..I haue no relish of them* (OED: VIII: 445)

(18) 1799 *Hall Advertiser 13 July 4/2 The slave-carrying ships were pestilential jails* (OED: XV: 666)

3. Noun-past participle compounds /adjectival compounds

E.g: *king-born*, *king-descended*, *king-favoured*, *noble-couraged*, *noble-hearted*, *noble-natured*, *noble-spirited*, *noble-tempered*, *peasant-born*, *prince-protected*, *slave-deserted*, *slave-grown*, *slave-peopled*, *slave-born*.

(19) 1860 *Gen. P.Thompson, Audi Alt. III, exli 120 The supply of slave-grown cotton* (OED: XV: 666)

Compounds ending in-“*ed*”: the derivational suffix -“*ed*” adds to the compound the meaning “*having smth*”/“*provided with smth*” [6, 7, 8].

The association of the two elements determines whether the respective compound has a **denotative** or an **evaluative** meaning:

- a) *Denotative* meaning: *prince-protected, slave-deserted, slave-peopled*;
- b) *Evaluative* meaning: **pejorative** (*peasant-born, slave-born, slave-grown*) and **ameliorative** (*noble-couraged, noble-hearted, noble-natured, noble-spirited, noble-tempered*).

IV. Conclusions

Compounding is very productive in enriching the lexical frame of English social terms.

1) The *frequency* with which a social term appears in compounds signals the *richness of its lexical paradigm*. According to the frequency of their *occurrence* in compounds, we conclude that the terms *king, queen, knight, peasant, prince, servant* and *slave* are *central* terms, having a rich lexical paradigm. Terms like *bailiff, boor, blackguard, duchess, footman, lackey, page, squire, villain* and *vassal* form few compounds while the terms *baroness, marquis, marquise, viscount, viscountess* and *vavassour* do not form compounds at all. These are *peripheral* terms.

2) The *productivity* of terms is related to the *position* they have in a compound. In a *modifier-head* compound, social terms can take *both positions*.

As *attributes*, they *qualify/modify the head* and, in some cases, they form subtypes (*king apple, queen cake*) of the head category. They modify the head by adding an *evaluative* meaning to the compound, *ameliorative* (*duchess-like, king-fern, king-bird*) or *pejorative* (*churl-mind, peasant-like*). Social terms which denote high ranks add an ameliorative meaning to the head of the compound, while low social rank words create compounds with a pejorative meaning [4].

In the case of metaphorical compounds (*boor's mustard*) they signal the semantic extension which the head undergoes, but they do not undergo sense extension.

They may also create appositional compounds (*king-poet, earl-marshal*) in which both members contribute equally to the meaning of the compound. The terms which are most productive in the *attribute position* are the *central* terms.

Social terms also form verbal compounds which denote events (*king-dethroning, slave-dealing*). In the *head* position, social terms are more productive when they are used literally and less productive when used figuratively (*coal baron*). When used metaphorically, social terms undergo figurative extensions from the social field to other different fields (*fur king, rock king*). The following terms do not appear in the right-hand position in a compound: *boor, churl, clown, earl, footman, knave, lackey, noble, page, peasant, slave, villain* and *vassal*.

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