
Innovated Compounds, Concepts, and Prototypes: A Road to Framing

Regine Eckardt & Qi Yu

Universität Konstanz

Regine.Eckardt@uni-konstanz.de, Qi.Yu@uni-konstanz.de

Innovated compounds (ICs) are frequently used in headlines to heighten readers' interest. German BILD, in particular, is famous for its use of ICs such as „Griechen-Fischer“ (Greek-fisherman), „Kopftuch-Praktikantin“ (hijab-intern) or „China-Maske“ (China-mask). Yu et al. (2022) measure the attitudinal meaning-triggering effect of ICs (e.g., “China-mask”) by comparing ICs with two control conditions: (a) phrasal alternatives (e.g., “Chinese mask”) and (b) simple neutral alternatives (e.g., “mask”). Their results show a weak but significant effect of innovated compounds on triggering stronger attitudinal meanings. In this work, we propose an explanation for this effect, combining semantics and cognition.

Sassoon (2011) distinguishes between the semantic structure of *nouns* and *adjectives*. The meaning of a noun N is defined by a prototype structure based on *dimensions* (e.g., color, size, shape) and ideal values in each dimension. The extension of N is determined by the weighted distance of objects x to the prototypical N exemplar. Speakers implicitly reason with prototype structures; they achieve fast categorization but can not reason explicitly about their decisions. Adjectives A, in contrast, refer to one dimension and speakers can reason explicitly whether A applies to a given object or not.

We show that Sassoon's linguistic tests side ICs with nouns; ICs thus rest on a prototype structure. An IC (e.g. „Kopftuch-Praktikantin“) introduces a prototype structure of its own, whereas phrasal alternatives rest on the prototype structure of the noun („Praktikantin“) and simple modification („mit Kopftuch“). Thus, ICs and their phrasal alternatives are *not* semantically equivalent, even if their extensions may be identical. —Finally, we take a closer look at the attitudinal meanings of ICs. While Sassoon (2011) offers a general basis to predict semantic differences between ICs and phrasal alternatives, examples are too varied to predict *specific* attitudinal effects. We use a range of ICs to demonstrate how novel prototype structures can flavor a referent positively (Olympia-Mädchen) or negatively (China-Maske), exoticize other nations (Griechen-Fischer), or frame religions as the cause of trouble (Kopftuch-Praktikantin).

References: Sassoon, G. W. (2011). Adjectival versus nominal categorization processes: The rule vs. similarity hypothesis. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 25, 104–147. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bjl.25.06sas> • Yu, Q., F. Schlotterbeck, R. Eckardt & B. Stolterfoht (2022). An experimental study on ad hoc compounds in political discourse. In Frau, F. et al. (eds.), *Book of Abstracts of the 9th Experimental Pragmatics Conference (XPRAG 2022)*. OSF.io <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/C4KP2>