
In defense of the “phrasal compounds involve quotations” thesis

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Phrasal compounds as a problem for the architecture of grammar Phrasal compounds (PCs) can be defined as compounds in which one of the immediate constituents (the first one, in most cases) is a phrase. Even though not completely unrestricted, the left constituent can be of almost any category. The head most often is a noun, but it does not have to be.

- (1) a. das [_{CP} Für-den-Mathespick-von-heute-lade-ich-dich-ein]-Angebot
 ‘The I-invite-you-because-of-math-cheat-of-today offer’
 b. ein [_{PP} für-umsonst]-Monat
 ‘the for-free moth’
 c. die [_{VP} Schnell-leben-und-jung-sterben]-Einstellung
 ‘the live-fast-and-die-young attitude’

This very definition – words that contain phrases – runs counter some core assumptions of many traditional models of grammar. Many theories of the architecture of grammar are characterized by being *linear* and *modular*. According to the concept of **modularity**, the language system consists of various, rather independent subsystems, or modules. For instance, there is morphology (the “word system”) and there is syntax (the “phrase system”), both of which exhibit module-specific rules and work on module-specific objects (i.e. morphemes vs. phrases). According to the concept of **linearity**, the different subsystems are not just separated from each other but are subject to a linear order: One module is active first and generates as its output the input for the next module.

More concretely, with respect to the the relation between morphology and syntax, these two assumptions lead to the following two constraints:

- (M) **Morphology ≠ syntax**
 They are different modules and work on different objects. (modularity)
(L) **First morphology, than syntax**
 Morphology provides the input for syntax. (linearity)

Taken together, this rules out PCs. Yet they do exist. Even though the reactions to this problem have been plentiful and diverse, they can be grouped into three classes of responses, depending on which of the two concepts they restrict or even reject.

- (RM) Giving up modularity: morphology = syntax (Lieber, 1992; Sproat, 1985)
(RL) Giving up linearity: syntax can provide input to morphology (Ackema & Neeleman, 2004; Meibauer, 2003, 2007)
(RB) Giving up both: holistic, construction-based approaches (Hein, 2015)

Because phrasal compounds lead to such far-reaching consequences for the architecture of grammar, they have been called a “touchstone” for theories of the morphology-syntax interface (Hein, 2015, 56). This idea is precisely what we argue against in this talk. Even if there may be other reasons to reject modularity or linearity (we do not discuss those here), we argue that the existence of phrasal compounds is not a problem for linearity and modularity. We do

this by resurrecting the so-called quotation analysis of phrasal compounds argued for by Wiese (1996) and according to which the phrasal constituent is a quotation. We aim to show that the arguments put forward in the literature against this approach are not convincing, even if they have been quite successful at stopping the adoption of the quotation analysis. Moreover, we also want to show that the quotation analysis can account for some of the particular properties of phrasal compounds for which the other, more radical approaches cannot easily offer an explanation; at least not without further assumptions. This will provide arguments for why the quotation analysis also has arguments in favor of it.

The quotation analysis of phrasal compounds In light of the challenges raised by PCs, Wiese (1996) proposed an attractive way out of the conundrum: the phrasal part of a PC is a quotation. For that reason, as Wiese argues, it acts as a single unit for the purposes of morphology as its internal structure is inaccessible. Hence, PCs do not pose a problem for linearity, since the phrasal component is not actually part of the compound. Wiese illustrates this as follows:

- (2) [_{X⁰} [_{Y⁰} [_{“CP”} Für den Mathespick von heute lade ich dich ein]] Angebot]

The syntactic category of the first conjunct cannot be seen by morphology, which is here symbolized by the quotation marks around the syntactic node. The entire quotation then functions as a word for the purposes of morphology (the category of which does not matter according to Wiese). Wiese presents various arguments for why the quotation hypothesis is warranted. First, many PCs contain material from foreign languages as in (3) or even non-linguistic material as in (4) in the phrasal slot. And in these cases, nobody seriously would argue that these should become part of morphology. So why assume this for phrasal compounds from the same language?

- (3) Zur **“laissez faire”** Haltung in der Erziehung passt dann konsequenter Weise auch die **‘C’est la vie’** Haltung.
 ‘The ‘C’est la vie’ attitude consequently matches the ‘laissez faire’ Haltung in education.’
- (4) a. In the next round, the ♥-team plays against the ♠-team.
 b. The [*speaker performs a sound*]-sound kept me awake all night.

Nobody would conclude from cases like these that the quoted material must be part of morphology, one shouldn’t draw such a conclusion for PCs. And arguably these cases all involve quotations of some sort.

Arguments against the quotation analysis The quotation analysis involves two assumptions: i) the phrasal component is a quotation (“ZP” in (2)), and ii) the quotation behaves like a word inside the compounds (Y⁰ in (2)). Both assumptions were attacked in the literature. First, the phrasal part can be completely new material (as in (1)) and hence assuming that it is a quotation is not warranted (Meibauer, 2007, 240). Secondly, the first part does not behave like words usually do. For instance, compounds are assumed to be “anaphoric isles”, which means that one cannot refer to just the first constituent. But with PCs, this is possible.

- (5) a. * Jedes **Mutter_i**söhnchen möchte am liebsten für immer bei **ihr_i** wohnen bleiben.
 ‘Every mother boy wants to live with her forever.’
- b. Jeder Meine-**Mama_i**-ist-die-Beste-Sohn möchte am liebsten für immer bei **ihr_i** wohnen bleiben.
 ‘Every ‘Mommy is the best’-boy wants to live with her forever.’

The two arguments were taken to be knock-down arguments against Wiese's quotation analysis and hence that approach did not play a major role in the following discussion regarding the status of PCs in grammar.

What are quotations? We think that the arguments against quotation analysis are not as forceful as presented in the literature; at least not if we adopt a more sophisticated approach to what quotations are. We follow the work championed by (Recanati, 2001), who in turn bases his ideas on the work by Clark & Gerrig (1990). Accordingly, quotations are basically linguistic demonstrations: the speaker produces linguistic material not to use it the ordinary way, but to demonstrate something with it. Just like that is possible with non-linguistic material.

(6) And then I showed them how I dance [*speaker demonstrates dancing moves*].

(7) And then I told him my opinion. "That's bullshit, Hans!"

Of course, we can demonstrate something nobody said before to illustrate a point. Hence, we should not understand the notion of quotation in the narrow sense of "repeating something already said".¹ Crucially, the "target" of the demonstration must be inferred by the hearer: what are the relevant aspects of the demonstration?

Beside assuming that quotations are demonstrations, Recanati distinguishes between *open* and *closed* quotation. A quotation is closed if the linguistic material is "linguistically recruited" and then takes up a nominal slot in the sentence frame. If it doesn't, a quotation is open (Recanati, 2001, 649)

(8) Stop that John! 'Nobody likes me', 'I am miserable' ... Don't you think you exaggerate a bit? (*open quotation*)

(9) John keeps crying and saying 'Nobody likes me'. (*closed quotation*)

In closed quotations, the syntactic category of the quoted material does not matter, it always takes up the same kind of slot. As this is also the case for the phrasal part in PCs, we assume that PCs involve closed quotations. For Recanati, there are three levels of meaning active in closed quotation: *a*) the linguistic meaning of the displayed material, *b*) the meaning of the demonstration, and *c*) the referential value of recruited demonstration. The idea is that by using a quotation, the speaker produces linguistic material which of itself has some meaning (*a*). However, the demonstration itself also has some meaning; namely the very target of the demonstration (*b*). Thirdly – and this is the linguistic recruitment – in closed quotation the quotation fills in a nominal slot and refers to target of the demonstration (*c*). So what is crucial here is that the quoted material is not really part of the sentence itself, it is a demonstration. However, one can use a demonstration at a nominal slot to refer to the target of the demonstration. This is exactly what happens in cases like (4b): the speaker produces a sound and uses it at precisely the point where she wants the meaning of that demonstration to be referred to by the sentence.

PCs and quotation Applying such a view on quotation to PCs has some interesting ramifications. First, Wiese's original idea still holds: the quoted material is not really part of the sentence. But with Recanati's theory we have a more precise description of this. The quoted material is not part of the linguistic material, because it is merely demonstrated and demonstrations are not part of the linguistic material. However, the demonstration can be "recruited" into a nominal slots, as (closed) quotations in general are nouns (Pafel, 2011). This means, PCs with a nominal head are N + N-compounds after all.² It is not the fact that the first part is

¹Wiese (1996, 188) already said that he had some more abstract notion of quotation in mind. Hence this argument against the quotation analysis seems to be like a straw man argument.

²This is compatible with Gallmann's conversion analysis of PCs (Gallmann, 1999).

phrasal that makes PCs special, but that it is quoted.

As already outlined above, this view on quotation does not require that the quoted phrases were uttered before; they only have to be demonstrated (in order that the recruitment can refer to a property associated with it). Hence, the first counter argument against the quotation analysis does not apply.

The second counterargument does also not apply. If the linguistic material is demonstrated, we actually expect it to be possible to refer to aspects of it, since it is not wrapped inside an “anaphoric island”. That is, reference in cases like (5b) is only seemingly to parts of the word, whereas it is actually to the external demonstration.

Adopting Recanati’s theory of quotations lets debunk the two counterarguments. However, there is also a strong argument in favor of the a quotation analysis, which is rather obvious but didn’t receive much attention in the literature. The fact that indexical expressions in PCs do not refer to aspects of the utterance context (but to some imagined context) is directly accounted for if the phrasal part is a quotation.

- (10) Dieser “Meine-Mama-ist-die-Beste”-Kerl ist total unselbstständig.
‘The ‘my mommy is the best’-guy is totally un-independent.’
≠ the speaker’s mother
= mother of the guy

That indexicals can shift in quotations is a well known fact and hence not surprising to occur in PCs if the quotation analysis is adopted. In contrast, approaches that do not analyze the first constituent as a quotation cannot explain this without further assumption. We take this as additional evidence that a quotation analysis of PCs is on the right track.

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