

Personal names and evaluative morphology - the case of eventive compounding in German

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Evaluative aspects of different word-formation patterns in German have been analyzed mostly by focussing on derivation, with a special focus on pejoration (Dammel & Quindt 2016). However, not all word formation patterns have been systematically considered with regard to their evaluative features. In German, this especially holds for personal name compounds (PN compounds) with a personal name in the second position, such as *Villen-Spahn* (cf. example 1), but also for name compounding with names in the first position such as *Merkel-Besuch* (cf. Schlücker 2020). While formal and semantic features of personal name compounds have been studied in detail (cf. Autor to appear), it remains unclear which communicative functions they convey and how their pragmatic features can be explained, as large-scale empirical studies using corpus data from authentic language usage are currently lacking.

The present paper is concerned with one subclass of PN compounds, namely eventive PN compounds such as *Villen-Spahn* (cf. example 1). In eventive PN compounds, the relation between the constituents can only be understood by drawing on extralinguistic knowledge about the participation of the name bearer in an extralinguistic event. Thus, the compound *Villen-Spahn* can be paraphrased as *Spahn has bought a villa*. The paraphrase evokes discursive knowledge that the former German health minister Spahn has bought an expensive villa, for which he was publicly criticised in the German media:

- 1) Nach „**Villen-Spahn**“ ist jetzt auch NRW-Ministerpräsident Armin Laschet in einen möglichen Riesenskandal verstrickt, der sich um seinen Sohn dreht.

After „**Villa-Spahn**“, also Armin Laschet, prime minister of Northrhine Westfalia, is now involved in a big scandal, about his son.

<https://journalistenwatch.com/2020/12/01/laschet-corona-wirtschaft/>

Drawing on a corpus of 609 types from the German Reference Corpus (W archive)¹ and the Digital Dictionary of the German Language (corpus WebXL)², we test the hypothesis that German PN compounding is a case of evaluative morphology in the sense of Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015). According to Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015: 13), a construction can be

¹ <https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/>

² <https://www.dwds.de/>

defined as evaluative if it satisfies two conditions, one relating to the functional and the other to the formal level. With respect to eventive PN compounds, the first condition plays an important role, according to which evaluative morphology has the function of assigning a value that is different from the ‘default value’ within the relevant semantic scale (cf. Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015).

We will show that the deviation from the standard value in eventive PN compounds emerges from the event evoked by the first constituent in German PN compounds deviating from standard expectations regarding the actions or the behaviour of name bearers, which derive from presuppositional senses of proper names (associative and categorial, van Langendonck 2008: 86). We conclude that German eventive PN compounding performs qualitative or subjective evaluation (cf. Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015: 10).

References

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