

# Compounds take the short way to the lexicon – A pragmatic approach to novel word-formation products

Holden Härtl  
Universität Kassel

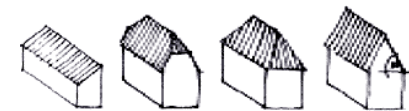
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Novel **compounds** somehow are better **names for kinds**:

- (1) *Das ??rote Dach / **Rotdach** hat sich im Laufe der Jahrhunderte immer weiter entwickelt.*

'the red roof / red\_roof has constantly developed over the centuries'



- (2) *Die ??rote Waffe / **Rotwaffe** ist eine Trainingswaffe, die für Ausbildungszwecke eingesetzt wird.*

'the red gun / red\_gun is a weapon used for training purposes'





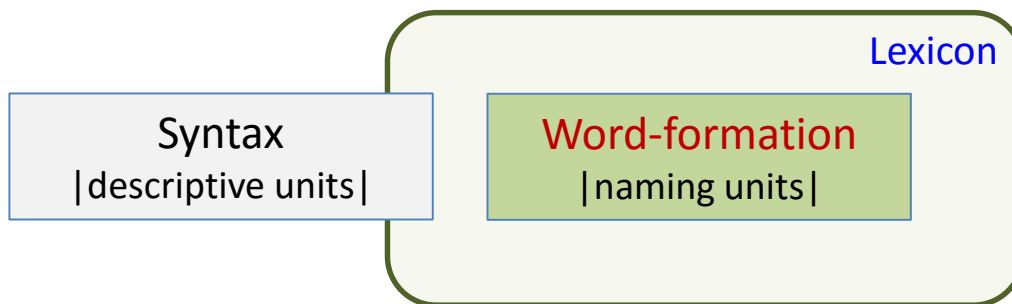
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*Lexicalist / separatist approaches:*



cf., among others, Booij (2010); Di Sciullo & Williams (1987); Lieber (1992), (2004)



- **Why** are (novel) compounds better names?
- Is this a purely lexical preference or are there **pragmatic** factors involved and, if so, which?

- 1 Adjective-nouns (AN) compounds as labels
  - *So-called* as means of quotation
  - Corpus study on quotation marks
- 2 A pragmatic implementation
- 3 Conclusion

# Kind reference and labelling

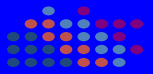


What is naming?

- creating a **sub-category** (i.e. a kind) of the category denoted by the head noun
- **labelling** that category



← create a category  
← label it



- **Name explanations** are less **tautological** with compounds than with phrases

(1) ??*Blaues Wasser / Blauwasser wird so genannt, weil es blau ist.*  
'blue water / blue\_water is called so because it is blue'

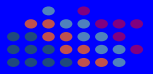
- Phrases are less acceptable in **naming environments** involving *sogenannt*

(2) *Die Schule hat ein sogenanntes ??rotes Dach / Rotdach.*  
'the school has a so-called red roof / red\_roof'

- ☞ Phrases improve significantly here when used with **quotation marks** / caps

(3) a. *Die Schule hat ein sogenanntes "Rotes Dach".*  
'the school has a so-called "red roof"

b. *Heute ist ein sogenannter "Heißer Tag".*  
'today is a so-called "hot day"'



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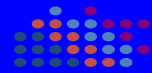
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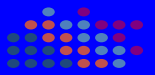


The semantics of *to call* / *so-called*:

- (1) *One calls this thing “clicker”.*





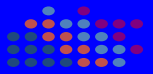


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CALL (*one*, *this thing*, NAME (*/kɪkər/*, *z*)): *z = y*



(2) *a so-called “clicker”*

≈ *a thing* that *one* calls *so* */kɪkər/*

*So* and quotation marks fulfill the **same function** in naming contexts:  
They point to *the shape* of an expression.



- Davidson's (1979) **Demonstrative** Theory:  
Quotational means help to refer to a linguistic shape by **pointing out** something that has this shape.

(1) *"Clicker" has seven letters.*

Davidson style prose:

*Clicker. The expression of which **this** is a token has seven letters.*



(2) *a **so**-called "clicker"*

*Clicker. The expression of which **this**<sub>i</sub> is a token is called **so**<sub>i</sub>.*





Quotes are used **more often** in naming contexts with expressions whose name status is **not inherent**.

Lexicalist hypothesis:

**A-N phrases** are used **more frequently** with quotes than compounds.

COSMAS corpus data; *so-called* + A-N:

***sogenannt\** + A-N compound [frequency class]**

<i>Grauwasser</i>	(‘gray_water’) [21]
<i>Weißfäule</i>	(‘white_rot’) [21]
<i>Grünbrücke</i>	(‘green_bridge’) [18]
<i>Schwarzlicht</i>	(‘black_light’) [17]
<i>Langholz</i>	(‘long_wood’) [16]

‘Dieses gering verschmutzte, häusliche Abwasser – **sogenanntes Grauwasser** – kann im Haushalt wiederverwendet werden.’

(‘this slightly polluted domestic wastewater – **so-called gray-water** – can be re-used in households’)

[NUN09/DEZ.02649]

***sogenannt\** + A-N phrase [frequency class]**

<i>blauer Brief</i>	(‘blue letter’, <i>pink slip</i> ) [21]
<i>grüner Pfeil</i>	(‘green arrow’, <i>turn-right sign</i> ) [21]
<i>roter Faden</i>	(‘red thread’, <i>golden thread</i> ) [18]
<i>grüne Welle</i>	(‘green wave’, <i>synchronized traffic</i> ) [17]
<i>kleine Anfrage</i>	(‘minor interpellation’) [16]

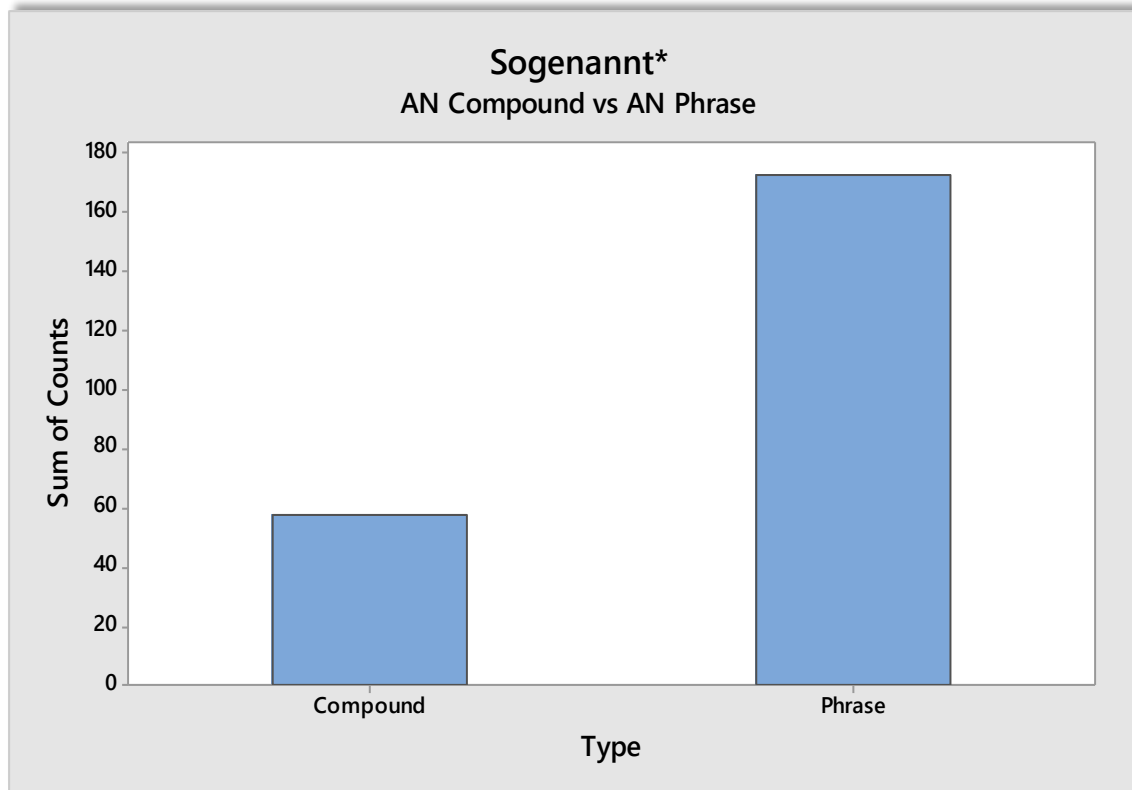
‘Zu Hunderten werden in diesen Tagen von Schulen des Rhein-Lahn-Kreises **sogenannte “blaue Briefe”** verschickt.’

(‘by the hundreds these days schools in the Rhine-Lahn district are sending out **so-called “blue letters”**’)

[RHZ98/MAI.13242]



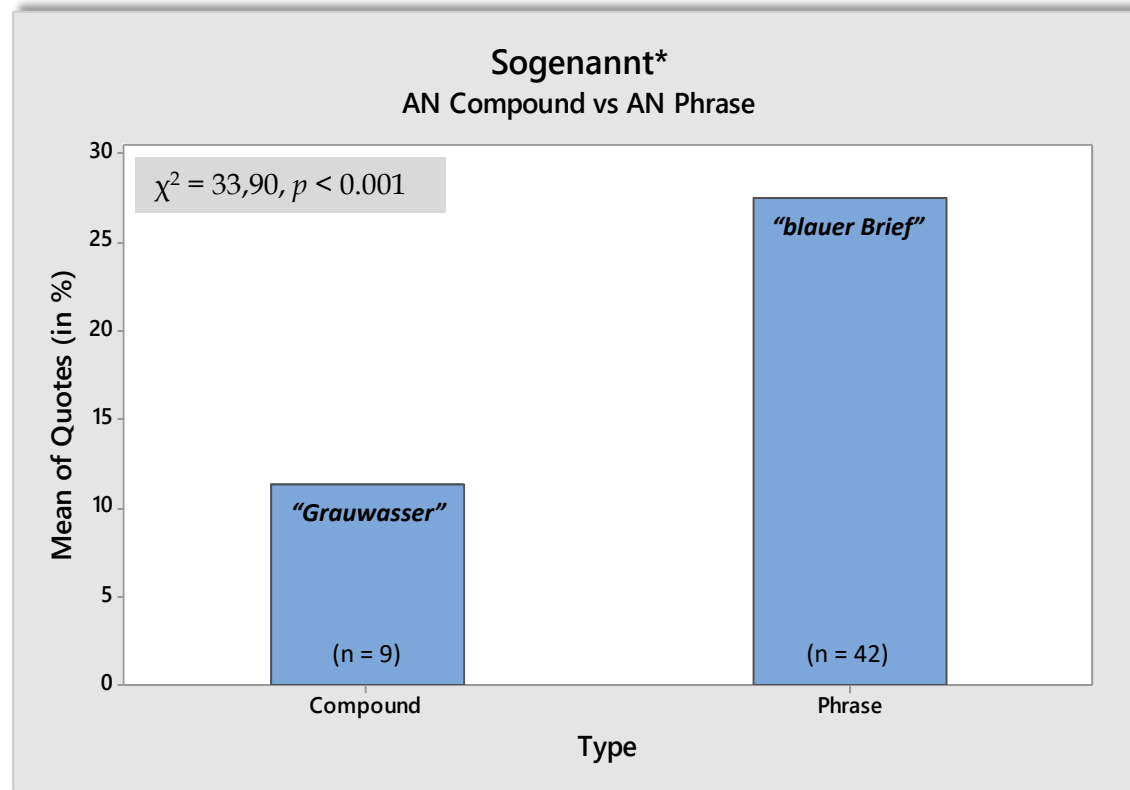
More A-N **phrases** than compounds with *sogenannt* ('so-called'):



This indicates **higher pressure to identify the naming function** of the phrases.



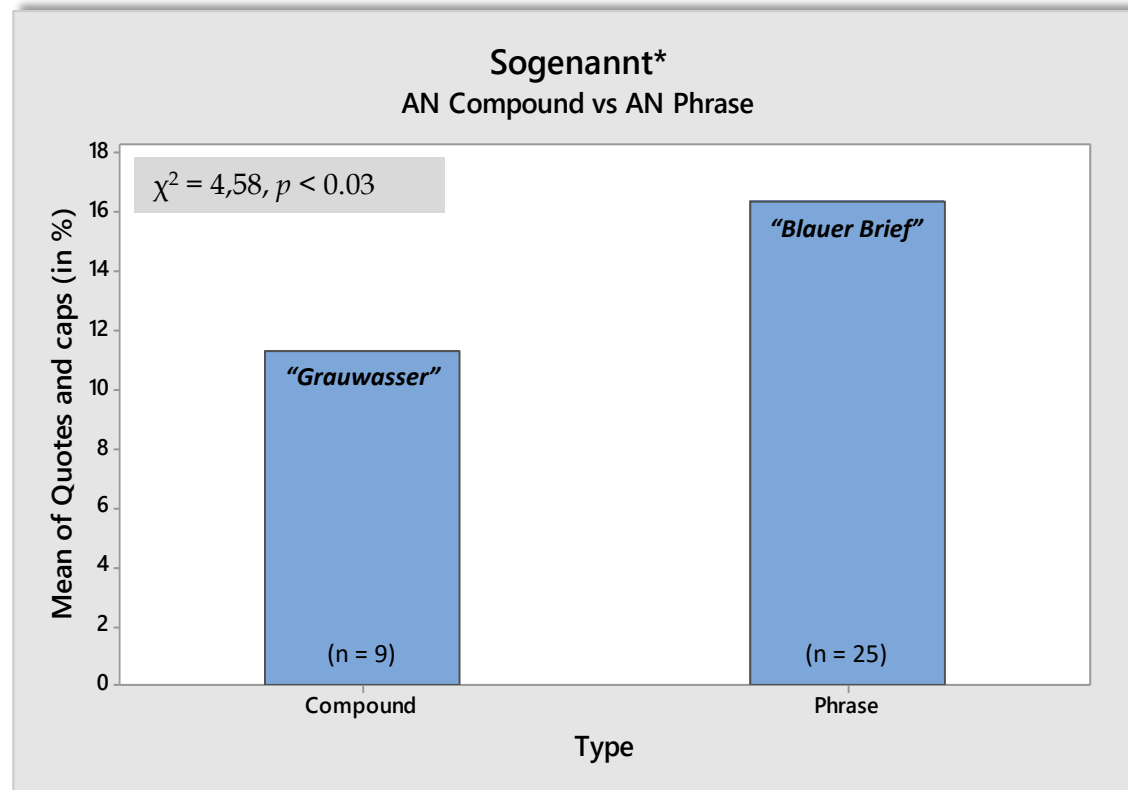
In *so-called* contexts, more often **phrases** are used with **quotation marks** than compounds:



This indicates a higher pressure for the phrase **to promote its naming use**.



Even when written **in capitals**, phrases are used more often with quotes than compounds:



- We conclude that **phrases** compared to compounds underlie a higher pressure to **specify their name status** as well as to mark the **naming use** of the phrasal expression.



# A pragmatic approach



Why are (novel) compounds better names?

Main idea:

Novel A-N compounds give rise to an **implicature** that they denote a **category** which **deviates** from that of the phrasal expression.

Evidence comes from **apparently identical pairs** involving Latin loan adjectives:

- (1) a. *Der Bentley hat ein optimales Design, fast schon ein Optimaldesign.*  
'the Bentley has an optimal design almost an optimal\_design'
- b. ??*Der Bentley hat ein Optimalesdesign, fast schon ein optimales Design.*

*almost*: Some property is not fully attained on the corresponding **scale** and the **complement** still holds: *almost X* → *not X*

- (2) *The water was pretty warm, almost hot.*





Scalar implicature: The choice of the **weaker** expression suggests that the **stronger** expression does not hold.

- (1) *Der Bentley hat ein optimales Design, fast schon ein Optimaldesign.*  
'the Bentley has an optimal design almost an optimal\_design'



- ☞ The compound represents the **stronger** category,<sup>1</sup> more eligible to represent a concept's name.

<sup>1</sup>Note: *Optimaldesign* is not assumed to be more optimal than *optimales Design*.



Why should the compound be the stronger, more name-prone category?

Proposal:

A novel A-N compound **deviates from the grammatical default way** of forming A-N complexes

- Syntax is default: **Morphology** produces **more marked forms** than syntax when the two generate otherwise equivalent outputs, see Ackema & Neeleman (2010):

*to drive a truck* ⓧ #*to truck-drive*

- Compounds are perceived as non-conventionalized:  
They produce a **novelty effect**, phrases don't, see Barz (1998), Olsen (1986).

**NEW!**



The choice of a novel compound gives rise to an implicature based on **M- / R-principle** (Horn 1984, Levinson 2000):

- M-principle

(Marked stuff indicates marked meanings)

Compound = more marked expression

→ meaning **deviates** from that of the unmarked expression (phrase)  
and denotes a kind of thing

- R-principle

(Say no more than you must)

Compound = non-default, less economical expression

→ meaning deviates from that of the default (phrase)  
and denotes a kind of thing



- Compounds are **better names**.
- They are **less likely** to be combined with **quotational means** (*sogenannt*, quotation marks), which can enforce a name status.
- A compound like *Optimaldesign* represent a **stronger category** than the (semantically analogous) phrase *optimales Design*.
- A **pragmatic** implementation seems reasonable:  
The meaning of the compound as the **more marked expression** deviates from the meaning of the phrasal counterpart, thus giving rise to a **kind reading**.
- Corollary: Kind reading is present **right from the beginning** – and not only after lexicalization.

Thank you.



References can be found in:

Härtl, H. (2015a) Semantic non-transparency in the mental lexicon: On the relation between word-formation and naming. In: Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde, Nina Kalwa, Nina-Maria Klug, Paul Reszke (eds.) *Eigentlichkeit – Zum Verhältnis von Sprache, Sprechern und Welt*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 395-416.

Härtl, H. (2015b) Normality at the boundary between word-formation and syntax. To appear in *Linguistische Berichte*.

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