

Double Endocentricity and Constituent Ordering of English Copulative Compounds

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Abstract: This study complements Lohmann’s (2014) corpus-based study on constituent ordering of copulative compounds by closely examining data that are hardly available in quantitative research. Copulative compounds “encompass a coordinative relationship between the two constituents such that both concepts are attributed simultaneously to one individual” (Olsen, 2001, p. 279). Given that the constituents in a coordinative relationship respectively express salient concepts of an individual, they are in principle interchangeable in their linear order (e.g., *writer-director* vs. *director-writer*). Lohmann (2014, p. 86) discerns differences in information status between constituents as a factor affecting constituent ordering and finds “a preference for the order from low to high information status.” When a referent indicated by one constituent has been already mentioned in previous discourse in some way, the constituent comes first; otherwise, the constituent has a high information status in that it introduces a new referent, thus expressed in final position. This study provides further evidence for the preference in constituent-ordering in copulative compounds by showing that their structure is also sensitive to context-givenness, which is difficult to be extracted from corpora. In doing so, this study contributes to the collaboration between quantitative and qualitative research.

Keywords: coordinated compound, hyponym-superordinate compound, information structure, text-givenness, context-givenness, accessibility

1. Introduction

Studies on information structure have mainly focused on sentence-level phenomena, as indicated in the recent published handbook of the research field: “Information structure refers to the structuring of sentences [...] in different kinds of information blocks” (Féry & Ishihara, 2016, p. 1). They do look inside a sentence, but their interests lie in phrase structuring. Smaller grammatical units than phrases, that is, words, are rarely examined in terms of information structure except for a few studies. This situation might be natural because information structure is concerned with propositions, which do not appear to be packaged into words. However, some morphological units are worth examining from a perspective of information structure. This paper shows that information structure is effective even in word-internal structuring, more precisely, constituent ordering of copulative compounds.

A few studies exceptionally have pointed out the relation between information structure and copulative compounds. Copulative compounds, a kind of coordinated compound, “encompass a coordinative relationship between the two constituents such that both concepts are attributed simultaneously to one individual” (Olsen, 2001, p. 279). For example, *singer-songwriter* refers to a person who is both a singer and a songwriter. Given this relationship, the constituents are in principle interchangeable in their linear order, as observed in the following pairs: *writer-director* and *director-writer*; *actor-singer* and *singer-actor*; and *journalist-author* and *author-journalist* (Olsen, 2001, p. 297). It is here that the view of information structure is required; the constituent ordering in copulative compounds is partially sensitive to the pragmatic factors (Olsen, 2001), more precisely, the distinction of given-new information (Lohmann, 2014). This study aims to present further evidence that some copulative compounds are constructed in accordance with the given-to-new ordering principle.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows some basic properties of copulative compounds and introduces the discussion on the determinants of their constituent ordering, which is

related to the distinction between given and new information. Section 3 points out that the notion of givenness consists of text-givenness and context-givenness, and demonstrates that context-givenness also affects the constituent ordering of copulative compounds. Section 4 shows that even lexicalized copulative compounds can be sensitive to the distinction between given and new information. Section 5 focuses on hyponym-superordinate compounds, another subtype of coordinated compounds, and points out that they can be grouped together with copulative compounds involving information structure in that their first constituent is the one that is more familiar or accessible to the speaker, in the case of hyponym-superordinate compounds, and to the speaker and the hearer, in the case of copulative compounds. Section 6 concludes this paper.

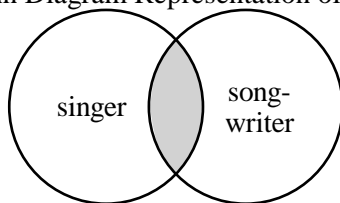
2. Constituent Ordering and Information Structure in Copulative Compounds

This section overviews some basic properties of copulative compounds, such as those in (1), which are especially relevant to our purpose. These compounds are also known as appositional compounds.

- (1) singer-songwriter, scholar-athlete, advertiser publisher, tent-office, comedy-drama, nerd-genius
(Bauer et al., 2013, p. 480)

These are “compounds which refer to a single individual or object that represents the intersection of two sets” (Bauer et al., 2013, p. 479). For example, *singer-songwriter* denotes the intersection of the two sets of singer and songwriter, as represented in the Venn diagram in (2), and “name[s] two aspects of a single individual, not two distinct individuals” (Bauer, 2008, p. 4); thus, a *singer-songwriter* refers to a person who is both a singer and a songwriter.

- (2) Venn Diagram Representation of *singer-songwriter*



(Bauer, 2008, p. 4)

Copulative compounds are a subclass of coordinated compounds, their constituents basically having equal semantic importance in that the constituents can respectively serve as a semantic head of the whole. Renner (2008, p. 608) characterizes this type of compound as being “doubly endocentric” and shows that the double endocentricity of *hunter-gatherer*, another instance of copulative compounds, can be represented in the following way:

- (3) a hunter-gatherer is a hunter; a hunter gatherer is a gatherer (Renner, 2008, p. 608)

Given this, let us use the following as a test sentence to detect double endocentricity in compounds (cf. Naya, 2020):

- (4) (an) X-Y is (an) X; (an) X-Y is (a) Y

This doubly endocentric nature of copulative compounds raises an issue concerning constituent ordering. Olsen (2001, p. 297) states that if copulative compounds have “the meaning ‘an x that is simultaneously A and B’, then the constituents A and B should be interchangeable in their linear order.” She shows that this is indeed the case by giving interchangeable instances including the followings:

- (5) a. writer-director director-writer
b. writer-producer producer-writer
c. director-producer producer-director
d. actor-director director-actor

e.	singer-actor	actor-singer
f.	singer-bassist	bassist-singer
g.	actress-comedian	comedian-actress
h.	dancer-singer	singer-dancer
i.	journalist-author	author-journalist
j.	inventor-scientist	scientist-inventor

(Olsen, 2001, p. 297)

Given these data, Olsen (2001, pp. 297–298) states that “nonce combinations [i.e., productively formed, non-lexicalized ones] seem to be completely free as to which order is used for the constituents.” Thus, “[i]f an explorer for National Geographic Magazine is using his tent on a glacier in Antarctica_[sic] as the office from which to write his reports, it makes little difference whether he refers to his shelter as a *tent-office* or *office-tent*” (Olsen, 2001, p. 298).

However, she also points out that the particular order is preferred for a pragmatic reason in certain cases, though this is not her main interest. More precisely, “the property under focus in the relevant context is most likely to be expressed in the final position as the semantic head of the construction” (Olsen, 2001, p. 297). The effect of contexts on constituent ordering can be observed in her examples *actor-environmentalist* and *bartender-psychologist*, as follows:

- (6) [When] *actor-environmentalist* was coined to refer to Robert Redford, it was because the newspaper report was focussed on the actor’s gift of a large plot of land to an environmentalist cause. (Olsen, 2001, p. 297)
- (7) [*B*] *bartender-psychologist* depicts, in the cartoon from which the word is taken, a bartender in his function of psychologically consoling guests at the bar who drink as a result of their problems, thus focussing on a typical situation of playing ‘psychologist’ in which a bartender often finds himself. (Olsen, 2001, p. 297)

This kind of pragmatic effect on constituent ordering can be further elaborated in terms of information structure. Lohmann (2014) observes the difference in information status between the constituents of copulative compounds and finds “a preference for the order from low to high information status” (Lohman, 2014, p. 86) from his corpus-based research.^[1] More precisely, when a referent indicated by one constituent has been already mentioned in previous discourse in some way, the constituent comes first; otherwise, the constituent has a high information status in that it introduces new information to the discourse, thus expressed as the right-hand element. If so, there exist copulative compounds that are sensitive to the information structure in the relevant discourse. Combining Olsen (2001) and Lohmann (2014), we can say that in such copulative compounds, the first constituent expresses given information and the second constituent introduces new information with high information status, which is highlighted as a focused element in the discourse. Importantly, the constituents of this type of compound are not freely interchangeable; in terms of information structure, a particular ordering is preferred in the context where the compound occurs.

3. Information Structure inside Copulative Compounds

3.1 Context-Givenness

This section provides further evidence for the existence of the copulative compounds whose composition reflects information structure. In Lohmann’s (2014) study, the information status of a constituent is judged as low, namely given information, when the relevant referent has been mentioned in the discourse. However, this is not the only situation where a constituent has the low information status. The notion of givenness can be divided into two types: text-givenness and context-givenness (Féry & Ishihara, 2016, p. 6). Text-givenness refers to the information previously mentioned in the discourse and context-givenness is related to the contextually salient information. This means that information can be a given-type even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the discourse. In fact, given information does not need to be previously mentioned; rather, information can be a given-type as long as the hearer can derive or infer from the previous context (Fukuchi, 1985, pp. 15–16).

Given that copulative compounds can bear information structure and givenness can be divided into two types, we can predict that they are also sensitive to another aspect of givenness that is not considered in Lohmann (2014). His study is a corpus-based, quantitative one, where the effects of context-givenness on the constituent ordering is hardly examined. To examine the above prediction and detect such effects, we need to rely on *qualitative* analysis. If copulative compounds are also sensitive to context-givenness, a constituent related to a concept characterizing an individual that is salient and easily accessible in the context should be more likely to appear as the first constituent. In the rest of this section, we show that context-givenness also has a significant effect on constituent ordering, providing additional evidence that copulative compounds can be constructed based on information structure.

3.2 *An Implication from Olsen's (2001) Data*

In this connection, Olsen's (2001) examples are worth reconsidering. Although she does not give precise contexts, her description of the examples that "exceptionally" prefer a particular ordering indicates possible sensitivity to the context-givenness. Recall from (6) that *actor-environmentalist* refers to Robert Redford. Since he is a famous actor, it is safe to say that his aspect as an actor is easily accessible even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the newspaper report; namely, the information that he is an actor is contextually given. In comparison to this aspect, his another aspect described in the second constituent, namely as an environmentalist, is rather new, hard to access and possibly uninferable or unexpected information to the reader. In this sense, the compound *actor-environmentalist* has appropriate information structure and more importantly, it is affected by context-givenness.

Likewise, in *bartender-psychologist* in (7), the first constituent can be regarded as contextually given information. This compound refers to a bartender who psychologically consoles guests at the bar. If we imagine the situation of the bar, it is quite easily understandable that a person that serves guests is called a bartender. However, it is hardly inferable from the situation that he or she is at the same time plays a role of "psychologist," which thus has high information status and is highlighted. This difference in information status determines the ordering; *bartender*, not *psychologist*, comes first.

3.3 *The Effects of Context-Givenness on Constituent Ordering*

Let us move on to our data, which additionally support the idea that copulative compounds are also sensitive to context-givenness. The first example, which is shown in (8), is cited from the back cover of the picture book entitled *Go Away, Big Green Monster!* by Ed Emberly.

- (8) With this exciting new edition that includes a shiny foil cover with die-cut eyes, Caldecott Award-winning author-artist Ed Emberley has created an ingenious way for kids to chase away their nighttime monsters. (underlining ours)

Here, Ed Emberly is described as *author-artist*, not *artist-author*. This compound is qualified as a doubly endocentric compound, as indicated in the following test sentence:

- (9) An author-artist is an author; an author-artist is an artist.

Before the description in (8), *author* has not been mentioned; namely, it is not textually given. However, since the book the reader has is written by Ed Emberley, it is highly likely that the reader has already known that his occupation is an author before reading the description. Thus, his aspect as an author is contextually given information. In contrast, his another aspect as an artist is new information to the reader. Accordingly, *author* comes first and *artist* is in the final position, which reflects the difference in information status; namely, contextually-given vs. new information.

If the compound is sensitive to information structure, the ordering should be reversed when the information related to *artist* is given in the context in some way. This is true, as shown in (10), where *artist-author* is judged as more appropriate to use than *author-artist*.

- (10) Ken is famous for his oil paintings, but he is an artist-author and has published several books.

In this case, too, Ken’s aspect as an *artist* is not explicitly, or textually, given; rather, it is inferable based on the information that he is famous for his oil paintings. Thus, the example in (10) further supports that the constituent ordering of copulative compounds can be sensitive to the distinction between contextually-given and new information.

Our second example comes from a video caption of a news report about an action to fight the locust plague that broke out in early 2020 and has spread from East African countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia to Southeast Asian countries including Pakistan and India. A Chinese news site reports a way to counter the possible locust attack by sharing a video showing thousands of ducks with the following caption:^[2]

- (11) 100,000 “duck troops” are gathering to prepare for the potential emergency.
 (<https://mobile.twitter.com/CGTNOOfficial/status/1230080286936879104>)

The ducks in the video are expected to save the country from the locust attack by preying on the insects, thus dubbed duck troops. This description indicates that the compound *duck troop* passes the test of double endocentricity, as follows:

- (12) Duck troops are ducks; duck troops are troops.

That is, the compound *duck troop* belongs to the copulative type. Then, its constituents should be reversible in principle. In fact, the ducks with the same role as that of the ducks mentioned above can be referred to as *troop duck*, too. However, in the above situation, the order *duck troop* is chosen and preferred. We argue that this ordering also reflects the effect of context-giveness on word-internal structure. Importantly, the caption in (11) is provided to the picture of thousands of ducks. In this context, the reader is most likely to perceive the birds at first without knowing their roles in the situation reported; namely, the reader does not understand what role the birds play until he or she reads the caption. In this sense, ducks are contextually-given information and their roles are new to the reader. Accordingly, it is reasonable to adopt the constituent order *duck troop* in the caption.

As in the case of *author-artist*, the situation can be reversed, which orders the constituents of the compound in the opposite way. Let us suppose the situation where the information related to *troop* is (contextually) given. For example, the situation in (13a) implies that the animals are expected to fight against locusts like troops. Among the animals is a duck. In this case, the order *troop-duck* is available, as shown in (13b).^[3]

- (13) a. Situation:
 A country has been suffering from a locust infestation, and its government has decided to tackle the insects with animals. The government brought together many animals.
 b. Many animals are sent to fight off the billions of locusts and there is only one troop-duck.

This fact, together with the example in (11), again shows that copulative compounds can be affected by context-giveness, as well as text-giveness.

3.4 Copulative Compounds with Three Constituents

Copulative compounds can have more than two constituents that are “arbitrarily” ordered, as indicated by the following examples from Olsen (2001, p. 297):

- (14) a. director-writer-producer writer-director-producer writer-producer-director
 b. singer-dancer-actress actress-singer-dancer
 (Olsen, 2001, p. 297)

Copulative compounds with three constituents can be also structured under the effects of information structure. For example, let us consider the description of John, a multi-talented person, in (15).

- (15) John is known as a skillful doctor. After working for a few years, however, he noticed that he was still interested in the academic study of medicine. He then decided to enter a doctoral

course in medicine. After successfully earning the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Medicine, he started to build his career as a researcher, too. In fact, he is a doctor-researcher-pianist. His 15th Anniversary piano recital is planned on December 19th, 2020.

In this description, the compound is followed by the information implying that he is a pianist. Accordingly, *doctor-researcher-pianist*, where *pianist* is in the final position, is preferred to *pianist-doctor-researcher* with *pianist* as the leftmost constituent. This indicates that the constituent ordering in copulative compounds is not totally arbitrary but can be sensitive to information structure, even when they have more than two constituents.

4. The Ordering of Lexicalized Copulative Compounds and Information Structure

So far, we have examined the constituent ordering of copulative compounds that are nonce combinations and observed that it is affected by information structure. This section focuses on lexicalized copulative compounds and examines whether their constituents are also ordered according to information structure. Let us consider the compound *singer-songwriter*, which is often referred to as a typical example of this type of compound. This compound can be considered lexicalized, given that some dictionaries have a distinct entry for *singer-songwriter*. Reflecting its lexicalized status, its constituent ordering seems to be relatively fixed. In fact, *songwriter-singer* is unlikely to be found in dictionaries. However, this is not an absolute ordering, and *songwriter-singer* is also possible when the compound appears in certain contexts. More specifically, the constituent *songwriter* is expected to come first when it is given information and *singer* is new information.

An example of such contexts is one in which *songwriter* is a shared property among the people concerned and they are differentiated by another property. Let us suppose that a magazine features several songwriters and focuses on their additional musical talents that are less-known to the public. For instance, the songwriters Tom and Mary are also talented as a singer and a guitarist, respectively. In this situation, Tom can be called a *songwriter-singer*, as in (16).

(16) Tom is a songwriter-singer but Mary a songwriter-guitarist.

Importantly, his property as a *songwriter* is given information in this case, because the magazine is about songwriters, and his other property as a *singer* is new to the reader. This means that the compound *songwriter-singer* follows the given-before-new principle. An additional example is given in (17).

(17) There are more songwriter-singers than songwriter-guitarists.

In both (16) and (17), the second constituents of the compounds, namely *singer* and *guitarist*, contribute to distinguishing the two songwriters Tom and Mary in (16) and the two types of songwriters in (17). In this sense, the second constituents in the compounds are contrastively-focused elements. This also supports the idea that even lexicalized copulative compounds can involve information structure, which is reflected in the ordering of their constituents.

So far, we have argued that the constituent ordering of copulative compounds can be sensitive not only to text-givenness but also context-givenness. Seen from a broader perspective, this indicates that when information structure affects compounds, their constituents are not just juxtaposed; rather, they are placed in an asymmetric relationship (i.e., given vs. new information), despite the fact that the compounds in question are classified as a type of coordinated compounds, which implies equal status between the constituents.

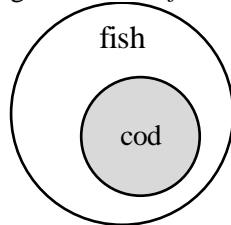
5. Constituent Ordering of Hyponym-Superordinate Compounds

When we address the issue related to constituent ordering in coordinated compounds, it is important to draw attention to another type of coordinated compound: hyponym-superordinate compounds such as those in (18), which are related to but distinct from copulative compounds.

- (18) a. cod-fish, oak-tree, fir-tree, mynah-bird (Bauer, 2008, p. 14)
 b. elm tree, daytime, winter season, tennis game, teaching profession, growing-up process, smoking habit, marriage relationship (Hatcher, 1952; see also Benczes, 2014, p. 435)

These compounds are comprised of a hyponym and its superordinate. The relationship between the two constituents, which may be called the “species-genus relationship” (Benczes, 2014, p. 435), is represented in the Venn diagram in (19).

(19) Venn diagram for *cod-fish*



(Bauer, 2008, p. 15)

As indicated in this diagram, a compound [AB] in this class involves a subsumption relationship between the constituents, which can be expressed as “A is or is assumed to be a logical subclass of B” (Marchand, 1969, pp. 40–41; see also Hatcher, 1952, p. 11, Benczes, 2014, p. 435); as a result, this relationship ensures that cod is by definition fish, for example.

Some studies regard hyponym-superordinate compounds as a distinct class from copulative compounds (e.g., Bauer, 2008) and moreover, doubt their status as coordinated compounds (e.g., Bauer, 2017, pp. 86–87). However, we group hyponym-superordinate compounds together with copulative compounds because they are both doubly endocentric, as indicated in (20).

- (20) An oak tree is an oak; an oak tree is a tree.

Importantly for our focus here, although hyponym-superordinate compounds are doubly endocentric, their constituents are not reversible. A hyponym must always precede a superordinate and the reversed ordering is not allowed, as shown in (21).

- (21) a. *tree oak, *profession teaching (Marchand, 1969, p. 42)
 b. *game chess, *dog hound, *fish tuna (Benczes, 2014, p. 437)

Benczes (2014, p. 438) argues that this fixed ordering observes the familiarity hierarchy (Allan, 1987, p. 52ff), which was originally proposed as a determinative factor of coordinated NPs (e.g., *Mary and Paul* vs. *Paul and Mary*). This hierarchy states that the more familiar precedes the less familiar and that the more familiar is lighter (or more easily cognitively processable) and more accessible than the less familiar (Allan, 1987, pp. 51–52; see also Tachihara & Goldberg, 2020). Assuming that the hyponym in hyponym-superordinate compounds is more familiar, Benczes (2014) points out that the difference in familiarity of the constituents justifies the ordering restriction found in the relevant compounds.

While Allan (1987) separates the familiarity hierarchy from hierarchies related to information structure, that is, “the topic < comment, given < new hierarchies” (Allan, 1987, p. 54), where X < Y means “X precedes Y,” the notions of familiarity and givenness can be subsumed under a larger notion. They are concerned with accessibility and saliency in the speaker’s mind, though givenness involves not only the speaker but also the hearer.

Thus, copulative compounds involving information structure and hyponym-superordinate compounds have similar internal structure; both types are doubly endocentric, with more easily accessible information in the first position. Hyponym-superordinate compounds can be regarded as a special case of copulative compounds, the constituents of which are in hyponym-hypernym relation.

6. Conclusion

This study focused on word-internal information structure, which has rarely been examined apart from in work by Lohmann (2014). His corpus-based, quantitative research shows that copulative compounds can be structured in accordance with the given-before-new principle. We provided further evidence for his finding by elaborating the notion of givenness. Importantly, givenness consists of two aspects, text-givenness and context-givenness, and the effect of the latter type on copulative compounds is hardly detected by corpus-based studies because it has non-verbal nature. For this reason, we qualitatively examined the data and demonstrated that context-givenness also affects the constituent ordering of both non-lexicalized and lexicalized copulative compounds. We further pointed out that hyponym-superordinate compounds can be grouped together with copulative compounds as the more easily accessible constituent comes first. In this way, we showed that our qualitative study complements Lohmann's quantitative study. We hope this collaboration contributes to a better understanding of the constituent ordering of copulative compounds.

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Notes

- [1] Information structure is not solely responsible for the order of coordinated expressions. Lohmann (2014) points out several other factors related to pragmatics, semantics, and phonology, which interact to determine the order of coordinated constituents. This study attempts to elaborate the effect of information structure as one possible determinant of the constituent ordering of copulative compounds.
- [2] For the use of the compound *duck troop*, see the article *Locust plague: How China sent 100,000 ducks to fight 'worst locust attack in decades'*, which is available at the following URL: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1245489/locust-plague-pakistan-africa-locust-swarm-attack-ducks-Xinjiang>
- [3] According to our informant, the order *duck troop* is still acceptable in this situation. Although this appears to contradict our argument in this paper, this option can be attributed to the nature of double endocentricity. Copulative compounds are always open to the possibilities of being left-headed and right-headed. Those who prefer *duck troop* may regard the compound as right-headed, emphasizing that the referent is a troop; in this case, *duck*, as a left-hand member, fulfills the classificatory function. As a result, *duck troop* can be interpreted to mean 'the troop that is of the duck-type.' However, *troop duck* in (13b) can be regarded as meaning 'the troop that is a duck,' where the left-hand member functions as the head to which the property (as a duck) is ascribed. This implies that the difference in headedness changes possible word-internal semantics, which should be studied in future research.

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