

# The Interpretation of Terminological Constructions: The Case of Technico-Scientific Nominal Compounds

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## Abstract

The analysis and interpretation of nominal compounds (NCs), defined as lexicalised noun phrases, have proven to be a recalcitrant problem from a syntactic-semantic perspective, owing mainly to two properties: compound recursion (i.e. productivity) and compound technicalization (i.e. semantic compactness). The paper therefore analyzes a set of concomitant, multifarious difficulties and problems associated with interpreting some English technico-scientific NCs arabicized by Jordan Academy of Arabic Language. To resolve the problems arising from two-element NCs, we developed a synthetic approach by drawing on four already existing principles, namely, Marchand's taxonomizing determinant / determinatum dichotomy (1969); the principles of headedness, percolation, and Right-hand Head Rule proposed by Selkirk (1982), Katamba (1993), Di Sciullo & Williams (1987), among others.

On the other hand, interpretation problems arising from multi-element NCs are also addressed by drawing on the already proposed synthetic approach which proposes three techniques viz. syntactic recovery, slicing & pairing, and building up or constructing patterns (i.e. productivity of patterns). Syntactic recovery is concerned with providing a rephrasing or an interpretation that exceeds the basic phrasal/genitive construct level (i.e. it provides sentential interpretation) as to recover covert syntactic and semantic links. Slicing & pairing is concerned with breaking the NC in question down into pairs; then it links the pairs up as to rebuild the NC's complex meaning. Building up or constructing patterns (i.e. productivity of patterns), the less reliable method, is concerned with predicting or sorting out the head element of an NC on the basis of the principle of frequency of occurrence of the constituents of the NC in question. The most frequent element is predicted to be the head or centre and the rest of elements are relegated to an inferior position of premodification.

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