

### On derivation, compounding and lexicalization

In many nominal compounds, the meaning of a head constituent is compositional, whereas the homonymous free word may have different specialized meanings:

(1) *lawbreaker, circuit breaker - breaker, ambulance chaser - chaser, coffee-maker*

In the OED we find definitions according to which *breaker* is 'a person or thing that breaks', *maker* 'a person or thing that makes or produces sth', etc. To produce and understand compounds (1) the language user must be able to apply the rule deriving the deverbal head-nouns from their verbal bases.

But beside the general definitions we find also heaps of specialized meanings for every head noun in (1). For example, *breaker* may mean 'one who cards wool; one who makes known tidings; one who subdues, tames, or trains; in cheese making, an implement for breaking the curd into small peaces; a large sea -wave which breaks on the shore; a kind of firework, etc.', *chaser* 'a horse for steeplechasing; a strong alcoholic drink taken after a weaker one; one who chases woman, a woman-chaser; a pursuer with hostile intent', *maker* 'God, the Creator of the Universe; one who composes a book, draws up a document, frames a law, etc.; one who brings about a condition, effect, state of mind; a producer of sth'. To be able to use these words independently in sentences the language user must have their special meanings stored in his mental lexicon, and recall them when the need arises.

Anshen and Aronoff (1988) argued convincingly that complex words with compositional meaning are produced when needed, and those with idiosyncratic meaning are stored in the lexicon. In the OED compounds with *breaker* as a headword are not listed, but only illustrated with few examples saying "in comb. with defining n., as *convent-, law-, sabbath-breaker*, etc.", and similar has been done with *maker*. We can now notice that *breaker* and *maker* are not names because their meaning is too general to pick up an object if the context is not given (Štekauer 2001). They can however become names if combined with a defining modifier in compounds, or if their meaning is lexicalized in some way. Štekauer's onomasiological theory helps us to understand the connection between lexicalization and names in terms of synchronic linguistics. Some words are too general to be naming units, but they can still take part in making naming units through compounding, affixation or lexicalization. The names are in principle stored in the mental lexicon as proposed by Štekauer, but their storage is probably influenced by the frequency with which they are retrieved. Štekauer however is wrong in assuming that the demand for new names always results in setting a coiner at work to forge missing names. The same need may sometimes be satisfied by lexicalization of already existing words. However, lexicalization is sometimes just a reduction of compounds as when the compound *woman-chaser* is reduced to *chaser* as in a sentence *The woman thought him an eligible bachelor, if a bit a chaser*.

### References

Anshen, F. and Aronoff, M. (1988) Producing Morphologically Complex Words,

*Linguistics* 26, 641-655.

Štekauer, P. 2001. "Fundamental Principles of an Onomasiological Theory of English Word-Formation." *Onomasiology Online* 2, [www.onomasiology.de] 1-42.