On the Comprehension of English Compound Nouns by Arabic-Speaking EFL Learners

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Abstract : This paper reports an investigation of the comprehension of English compound nouns by sixty Arabic-speaking English Foreign Language (EFL) learners majoring in English at the University of Jordan, Amman. The investigation focused on the problems that these learners may encounter in understanding certain types of compounds and their ability to use their L1 compound noun knowledge to produce the meaning of L2 compound nouns. Participants whose English proficiency level was advanced underwent a test to identify the meaning ofan underlined compound without using a dictionary. Theresponses to the three different types of compounds were analyzed usingTwo-Way repeated measures ANOVA, and the results showed that there were different endocentric and exocentric compound responses within subordinative compounds, with a statistically significant difference between the two in favor of endocentric compounds. We argue that the endocentric, especially subordinative endocentric compounds,weremore easily understood due to its representative nature, i.e., because the head represents the meaning of the whole compound. The study concludes with pedagogical implications for teaching compound nouns.

Keywords : morphology, compounding, SLA, arabic-speaking EFL learners
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