

Book notices: Review of *Compound stress in English*

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Compound Stress in English: the Phonetics and Phonology of Prosodic Prominence. Gero Kunter. (Linguistische Arbeiten 539.) Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. Pp. xii, 225. ISBN 9783110254693. \$150 (Hb).

Reviewed by Karen Steffen Chung, National Taiwan University

English compound noun stress is a relatively neglected area of English phonetics and phonology, with some notable exceptions, such as Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle's groundbreaking classic, *The Sound Pattern of English*. Gero Kunter has invested considerable effort in addressing this deficit in the present volume, a revised version of his PhD dissertation.

This work is not, as some might expect, a comprehensive list of the rules and 'exceptions' of English compound noun stress—for these, the reader is directed to the work of researchers such as University College London's John Wells. The largest part of this work is a highly detailed, step-by-step description of the methods and procedures K followed to investigate the acoustic and other features of English compound nouns (e.g. *fire fighters*), as opposed to phrases (e.g. *Libyan fighters*), collected from his chosen corpus, the Boston University Radio Speech Corpus.

Using a spoken corpus has the strength of providing real native-speaker data. In some cases the readers were asked to read in a non-radio style, which is crucial, since news readers tend to use a strongly emphatic style in order to hold listener interest, in the process often overruling compound noun stress patterns. Possible drawbacks are, first, that the collection of examples is necessarily limited to what occurs in the corpus, something K is well aware of, and to what the researcher recognizes as compounds; and second, that the examples are subject to all kinds of contextual, syntactic, and pragmatic influences, such as newness of the information and sentential position, which are mentioned (e.g. in Ch. 8) but not treated in depth in this study.

The use of listeners to identify the stress patterns of the collected corpus items shows how untrained native speakers may have trouble accurately describing what they hear, in spite of being able to produce the forms correctly themselves with ease (49). K also analyzed his data instrumentally with Praat software, using a number of parameters, such as duration and intensity, to rate, confirm, and quantify the evaluators' judgments.

A significant finding: the length of the left element is invariant in both left-prominent and right-prominent compounds, demonstrating that 'right prominent' compounds, like *brick wall*, are indeed stressed on both syllables, even though the right-hand element may sound more prominent due to accentual tonic stress (68).

K considers three main approaches to account for compound prominence patterns: structural differences, semantic properties, and analogical effects. K comes down in favor of the third approach, though he concedes that the first two approaches can account for 'a significant proportion of the observed prominence patterns' (204).

An issue that perhaps could have been explored in greater depth is the compound-like behavior of many *-ic* and *-al* type phrases composed of an adjective and a noun, such as *political system* and *economic situation*. Nevertheless, for anyone interested in learning about some hands-on approaches to laboratory phonetics and phonology methodology, this book could serve as a useful reference.