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THE IMPORTANCE AND PLACE OF WORD FORMATION IN GERMAN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING¹

Abstract

Changes in language reflect changes in society's social, economic, political, cultural, and scientific advances, causing its lexicon to expand and enrich with new terms on a regular basis. Word formation, which covers the morphological processes involved in producing new words based on and helped by existing linguistic material, has a unique role and contribution to the richness of the lexicon of a language, in addition to loans from other languages. Word building is inextricably linked to the vocabulary and grammar of a language, and it cannot be separated from the study of a foreign language. The purpose of this article is to discuss various aspects of word formation in the teaching and learning of German.

Following a general description of the word formation processes that exist in German, the focus will shift to the role and importance of word formation in various German language learning course books for A1-B1+ levels, as well as the types of exercises used to understand the best ways and patterns to form new words, all of which are linked to the development of language skills and competence.

Key Words: Word Formation, Word Formation Processes, Word Formation Exercises, Word Formation Teaching, Vocabulary Teaching, German Language

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ALMANCA DİLİ ÖĞRETİM VE ÖĞRENİMİNDE SÖZCÜK OLUŞUMUNUN ÖNEMİ VE YERİ

Özet

Dildeki değişiklikler, toplumun sosyal, ekonomik, politik, kültürel ve bilimsel ilerlemelerindeki değişiklikleri yansıtır ve sözlüğünün düzenli olarak yeni terimlerle genişlemesine ve zenginleşmesine neden olur. Mevcut dilsel malzemeye dayanan ve bu malzeme tarafından desteklenen yeni sözcüklerin üretilmesinde yer alan morfolojik süreçleri kapsayan sözcük oluşumu, diğer dillerden alıntılara ek olarak, bir dilin söz varlığının zenginliğine benzersiz bir role ve katkıya sahiptir. Sözcük oluşturma, bir dilin sözcük dağarcığı ve dilbilgisi ile ayrılmaz bir şekilde bağlantılıdır ve bir yabancı dil çalışmasından ayrılamaz. Bu makalenin amacı, Almanca öğretimi ve öğreniminde kelime oluşumunun çeşitli yönlerini tartışmaktır.

Almanca'da var olan kelime oluşturma işlemlerinin genel bir açıklamasının ardından, A1-B1+ seviyeleri için çeşitli Almanca dil öğrenme ders kitaplarında kelime oluşturma rolü ve önemi ile Almanca'yı anlamak için kullanılan alıştırmalar türleri üzerinde durulacaktır. Hepsisi dil becerilerinin ve yeterliliğinin geliştirilmesiyle bağlantılı olan yeni kelimeler oluşturma en iyi yolları ve kalıpları açıklanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelime Oluşturma, Kelime Oluşturma İşlemleri, Kelime Oluşturma Çalışmaları, Kelime Oluşturma Öğretimi, Kelime Bilgisi Öğretimi, Almanca

INTRODUCTION

Word formation in the German language

The German language is very rich in words. Jung, based on several studies, estimates that the lexicon of the German language includes about 500,000 words, more than half of which are nouns. Verbs make up a quarter of this lexicon, while adjectives and adverbs make up one-sixth of it. *“Nouns, verbs and adjectives are constantly changing and enriching their class with new words, while pronouns and linking words remain almost constant in form and number. / Die Substantive, Verben und Adjektive vermehren und verändern ihren Bestand standing, Pronomen und Fügewörter bleiben in Form und Umfang nahezu konstant”* (Jung 1980: 369). This is one of the reasons why in the word-formation literature of the German language more attention has been paid to the class of nouns, adjectives, verbs and less to adverbs, while the other parts of speech have failed to become a focus of interest for these studies.

One of the most important ways that contributes to the expansion of the lexicon of a language is undoubtedly word formation, which is seen and defined as *“The process of forming new words through combining and changing morphemes in order to enrich the vocabulary./ Prozess der Bildung neuer Wörter, welcher der Erweiterung des Wortschatzes einer Sprache*

dient. Dabei werden auf verschiedene Weise Morphemen miteinander kombiniert oder verändert.” (Busch/Stenschke 2014: 94)

The German language is rich in word-formation processes, among which the most productive and active are composition and derivation.

Composition is the formation of new words by joining two or more lexical morphemes (*Abendkleid* – Abend + Kleid; *Reitschule* – reit(en) + Schule). What is characteristic of compounds is their two-element structure. Adding one base to another stem creates a new word which has a closed structure, its own grammatical categories and functions as a single unit despite the grammatical-lexical features of the constituent elements.

Elements that compounds are made up of can form a coordinating relationship with each other forming copulative compounds (*taubblind* – taub und blind; *Dichterkomponist* – Dichter und Komponist). Due to the coordinating relationship the elements forming part of a copulative compound have the same weight in the sentence and belong to the same word class. In German copulative compounds are found less frequently and mainly in the adjective class (Lohde 2006: 38).

The largest group of compounds in German consists of determinative compounds, whose elements form a subordinating relationship with each other. The first element is also called a qualifier (*Bestimmungswort*), whereas the second, the element qualified/subcategorized by the first being always the last in the compound word is called the base word (head) (*Grundwort*). Thus in the word *Wanduhr* (*wall clock*) it is the word *wall* (*Wand*) which specifies the type of *clock* (*Uhr*) and distinguishes it from the other clocks. The first element, or the qualifier, can be composed of several elements (*Schaufensterpuppe* – Schaufenster + Puppe), but within the compound it functions as a single element, thus respecting the binary (two-element) structure characteristic of these compounds. The second element is the head of the whole compound, as it is the one that grammatically forms the compound, reflecting its grammatical categories. Another characteristic of determinative compounds is the fixed order of the constituent parts. Changes in this word order would either break the compound or cause a semantic change which would result in a new compound (*Fimmusik* – *Musikfilm*).

In many cases the elements forming part of compounds are related to sounds or sound units, which are known as Fugenelement (Duden 1998: 411). German language compounds are formed with or without a linking word. According to Duden (1998: 494), most German language compounds are made up of two elements only; the qualifier and the qualified part. Nearly a third of them, about 30%, combine words (bases) by means of a linking device, which

has no semantic meaning and therefore cannot be called an infix. Schippan (1992: 84) calls it “*leeres Morph*”/empty morph, which does not affect the meaning of the compound, thus becoming part of the phonemic structure of the word, but not of the semantic one. These elements are derived from inflectional morphemes, which performed a grammatical function such as the genitive case for *-s/ -es* or *-en* as in *Berufserfahrung, Jahresanfang, Bärenkraft*. These compounds are formed from the univerbation of phrases, such as *Herzensqual*. Even after the transition to compounds these univerbated words have retained their structure along with the inflectional morphemes, which have lost their grammatical function and meaning over time. By analogy with them, other compounds were later formed.

The second most productive way of word formation in the German language is **derivation**, a process during which the formation of new words is realized by means of derivational morphemes (Römer 2019: 46). In German word-formation theory a distinction is made between explicit derivation (explizite Derivation) and implicit derivation (implizite Derivation). Through explicit derivation new words are formed by combining a lexical morpheme with a derivational affix, which can be a prefix, a suffix or even a circumfix.

Suffixation is the most productive subtype of derivation. The German language has a large number of suffixes which are class changing, which means they can convert the main element they are joined to into another part of speech, thus changing the lexico-grammatical category of the newly formed word. In many cases suffixes can extend the word family simply by changing or modifying the lexical meaning of the main element leaving its grammatical meaning intact. In nearly fifty percent of cases suffixation does not change the grammatical category of the new word (Eisenberg: 272): *Arzt – Ärztin, Freund – Freundschaft; froh – fröhlich; steigen – steigern*. Suffixes occupy a fixed position. They always come after the word stem (base form) they are added to and usually each suffix grammatically determines the part of speech that the word belongs to. Thus, the suffix *-ig* is used to form adjectives such as *kräftig, schmutzig* etc; the suffixes *-heit, -keit, -schaft-* serve to form feminine nouns such as *Freiheit, Fröhlichkeit, Bürgerschaft* etc.; the suffix *-weise* is used to form adverbs such as *bedauerlicherweise, schrittweise* etc.

Prefixes are placed before the stem of a word to form a new (different) word. They are not class changing, i.e. they do not determine the grammatical categories of the words they serve to form. Most of the prefixes change the meaning of the word stem they are joined to mostly by reinforcing, intensifying or negating it. However, there are other prefixes which give another lexical (*verstehen*) or grammatical (*beantworten*) meaning to the new word formed.

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Some of the most commonly used and active prefixes in German are: *erz-*: *Erzengel, erzböse*, *miss-*: *Missachtung, missgebildet; missverstehen*; *un-*: *Ungleichgewicht, unabhängig*; *ur-*, *Urzeit, uralt*. The prefixes *be-*; *ent-*; *er-*; *ver-* and *zer-* are used to form only verbs: *kommen – bekommen*; *fallen – entfallen*; *finden – erfinden*; *stehen – verstehen, legen – zerlegen*.

The formation of new words by means of **circumfixes** (Zirkumfix) is even less productive. Not only is there a limited number of circumfixes, but they are not so productive, either. The prefix *Ge* and the suffix *e* are used to form abstract neuter gender nouns, which in most cases denote an action or process and have a negative connotation. In such cases the action is repetitive and prolonged (*Gelache, Gerede*). There are also some adjectives (*geläufig, gelehrt*) which are formed from the verb stem by adding the prefix *ge-* and the suffix *-ig*, accompanied also by some sound change in the word stem. Adjectives are formed from the noun stem by adding the prefix *ge-* or *be-* and the suffixes *-t* (*bebrillt, gefleckt*), as well. The prefixes *be-/ver-* and the suffix *-ig(en)* are used to form verbs (*beteiligen, verkündigen*).

Through **implicit derivation** new words are formed without any distinct affixes, but with the root undergoing a sound change, which Erben (2006: 31) calls “*root alternation/ Stammalternation*”. Derivation without affixation as a means of word formation is no longer productive today. It mainly occurs in nouns and verbs. The nouns which are formed without affixes derive from verbs (*fliegen - Flug, zwingen – Zwang, kaufen - Kauf*). There are also a few verbs that are formed without suffixes (*fallen – fällen, liegen – legen*).

Conversion is the way of word-building which consists in turning a word of a certain part of speech into a word of another part of speech without affixation or a change of sound. Through conversion, the word classes of nouns, adjectives and verbs are enriched and extended. But there are also some closed-class words which are formed by means of conversion, for instance some adverbs or prepositions (*essen – Essen; der Dank – dank + Gen.*). The most productive and significant ‘model’ of conversion is **nouning** (conversion to nouns), which Eichinger (2000: 168) calls “*Kernfall der Konversion / the core of conversion*”. It is the class of nouns that is particularly extended through conversion. According to Jung “*Wörter aller Wortarten können substantiviert werden. / The words of all parts of speech can be nouned.*” (Jung 1988: 388) The Infinitive, one of the non-finite forms of the verb, is used to form neuter gender nouns which, in the vast majority of cases, are abstract nouns do not take a plural ending and denote a process. There is a theory according to which every part of speech can be nouned. When other parts of speech are converted into nouns, they are mainly of neuter gender: *das Ich, das Du, das Heute, das Wenn, die Eins, die Zwei*. There are many cases of

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conversion to adjectives from past participle forms of verbs . Adjectives derived from present participles mainly have an active meaning and they identify the noun that they modify as being the one that performs the action expressed by the verb the participial adjective is derived from: ein *weinendes* Kind ist ein Kind, das weint; ein *schlafender* Hund ist ein Hund, der schläft etc. whereas adjectives derived from the past participle of verbs mainly have a passive meaning. They are used to describe a state of the thing or person they modify: eine *angewandte* Methode ist eine Methode, die angewandt worden ist.

In German there are also words which are formed by **repeating the same word** (*soso*), or words formed by **merging two words** into a single one (*jein* – ja + nein, *Kurlaub* – Kur + Urlaub). However, such formations are rather random and only a few have succeeded in becoming part of language dictionaries.

Another word-formation process which is no longer productive is **univerbation**. It doesn't receive much attention in the theory of German word formation, either. Univerbated words are formed by merging a syntactic group of several words as a result of having been used for a long time (*Taugenichts*, *Rühmichnichtan*). Some linguists also recognise a German way of word building which consist in forming new words from composition and suffixation, known as the mixed way. Words formed by combining a fixed phrase and a suffix are examples of this process: *Zeit nehmen* + -er – *Zeitnehmer*; *Macht ausüben* + -ung – *Machtausübung*.

Word formation is closely related to the lexicon of a language since, as we have already pointed out, it has a direct impact on it as the most productive and active way of expanding and enriching it with new words. Vocabulary learning, on the other hand, is an essential part of learning a foreign language. There is no point in knowing grammar rules if we lack vocabulary knowledge. Language is a means of communication and learning a foreign language serves to do precisely that, communicate in this language. Learning new words and expanding vocabulary are considered very important in learning a foreign language. In addition, the word-formation potential of the German lexicon makes it possible to deal with word-formation from the first days of learning German (Storch 1999: 91).

In this part of the paper we will try to shed light on the place that word formation occupies in German textbooks, analyzing some of them from the point of view of word formation. The reasons why word formation should be dealt with in German language teaching have long been articulated by many authors whose object of study has been German language didactics (Elsen 2019: 142). These reasons are mainly related to the role that knowing the rules

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and means of word formation plays in understanding complex word formations as well as specific terms better, enhancing comprehension skills through reading as well as expanding both receptive (passive) and productive (active) vocabulary. Six German language course books were analyzed, from level A1 to level B1 +, designed for young adults and adults.

The textbook “*Beste Freunde*” is intended for teenagers and covers levels A1 - B1 offering a set of 18 units for each level. Word formation is dealt with in the grammar section. At A1 level, when separable and inseparable verbs are analysed, light is shed on the verbs formed by adding prefixes. Suffixation is addressed at the end of A1 level through the formation of ordinal numbers. It also appears at level A2 where the formation of feminine nouns of different nationalities through the suffix *-in* is explained. At the end of B1 level the conversion of adjectives and participles to nouns sheds light on conversion.

“*Menschen*” is meant for use by young and adult learners. This 3-level course book series is suitable for levels A1-B1 and each course book consists of 24 units. Word formation is discussed at level A1. In addition to the verbs formed by derivation, which are analyzed in the context of separable and inseparable verbs, attention is also paid to the prefix *un-* highlighting its role in forming antonymous adjectives. In as early as unit 2 we encounter the prefix *-in* forming nouns which denote female professions, whereas at the end of A1 level attention is paid to the use of the prefix *-los* to form adjectives from nouns pointing out even shades of meaning that this suffix carries. In the last A1 level unit, ordinal numbers are also included. At A2 level, in the word formation section, we find the formation of nouns from verbs with the suffixes *-er* and *-ung*. At B1 Level the nouning of adjectives (unit 1) and adjectives formed from past participles are analyzed in terms of grammar. In unit 18 attention is paid to the formation of nouns by means of = these suffixes: *-heit/-keit/-ismus/-ler/-ant* and *-ent*, pointing out the class of words that serve as word forming lexemes.

“*Schritte International*” is designed for the adult age group. This is also a 3-level course book series covering A1-B1 levels. In addition to the verbs formed by derivation which are treated in the context of separable and inseparable verbs, at level A1 (unit 8) importance is given to the formation of feminine nouns denoting professions where, in addition to the suffix *-in*, the formation *Kaufmann/Kauffrau* appears. Word formation is given more importance at A2 level, where unit 10 deals with the formation of adjectives with the prefix *un-* and the suffix *-los* from nouns and their meanings, as well as the formation of nouns with the suffix *-ung* from the verb stem. Unit 11 also pays attention to the adjectives formed by adding the suffixes

-bar, *-isch* and *-ig* focusing on the word class to which these suffixes are joined. the conversion of past participles to adjectives is treated in B1 level books (units 10 and 13).

“*Motive*” was meant for use by adults wishing to learn German within a short period of time This course book is also composed of 3 books (A1- 8 units, A2- 10 units and B1- 12 units). In the first course book of this series, in addition to separable verbs (unit 4), the formation of feminine nouns denoting professions through the suffix *-in* (unit 2) is also treated. At level A2 we find the formation of adjectives by adding the prefix *un-* their meaning explained through this suffix, as well as by adding the suffix *-ig* (unit 12). In unit 19 we encounter the formation of nouns by adding the suffixes *-er/-in/-ung*. While in B1 level, the adjectives formed with the suffix *-los* are treated, where the attention is drawn to the use in some cases of the linking element *-s* (unit 19) and with the ending *-lich*. In addition to nouns formed with the suffixes *-heit* and *-keit* (unit 26), in unit 20 the determinative nominal compounds formed according to the ‘model’ adjective + noun and noun + noun are dealt with. In unit 28, importance is given to the nouning of past participles.

“*Ausblick B1+*” is designed for teenagers and young people with intermediate knowledge of the German language and consists of 10 units. In this book only unit 9 treats the formation of nouns with the suffixes *-ung/-er/-erin*, without affixes as well as the nouning of the infinitive (*Infinitiv*).

“*Sicher B1+*” is designed for adults with intermediate knowledge of the German language and consists of 8 units. In this book word formation is treated in unit 4, which focuses on noun compounds of the *adjective + noun*, *noun + noun* and *verb + noun* types. While in unit 7 attention is paid to the formation of nouns with the suffixes *-er/-ler/-ent/-ant/-chen/-ung/-hei/-keit/-ei* and *-ie* focusing on their grammatical function as a determinant of the gender of the new noun.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above analysis we conclude that word formation in foreign language textbooks continues to occupy a peripheral place (Bohn 1999: 52). Few means of word-formation are introduced and even the one introduced are dealt with superficially. Lack of the rules that govern these processes and the fact that there are not enough examples become easily noticeable both in the unit and in the summary of the topics covered at the end of the unit. There are few dedicated exercises even in the workbook.

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These books focus only on the word formation of nouns and adjectives. The formation of verbs is of no interest. Even in the case of separable and inseparable verbs, which are formed by putting certain prefixes in front of the base, it is their morphological and syntactic aspect that is treated.

The most important place is occupied by the formation of adjectives and nouns by adding suffixes. We believe that the reason why suffixes like *-los, -lich, -er, -in, -ung* etc, are treated may have to do with the fact that these suffixes also have a distinct meaning of their own, as in the case of the prefix *un-* which is used to form adjectives which are the opposite of the adjective used as a word stem. By getting acquainted with the meanings of these affixes, students can increase their perceptive competence at these levels. They become accustomed to these word-formation patterns, which they can later use to understand unfamiliar words placed in a given context.

Conversion is another word-formation process which is seen only in two aspects: the nouning of adjectives, past participles and the non-finite form of the verb (Infinitive), as well as the conversion of past participles to adjectives.

Compounding is either not touched upon or it is dealt with only superficially in German textbooks, pointing out only the structure of the compound word and the role of its constituents based only on two or three most productive models of determinative noun compounds. We think this has to do with the fact that in the A1-B1 level vocabulary, compounds formed by more than 2 morphemes are rare, almost non-existent. Up to B1 level the student is able to understand the essential issues within the context of a clear language where topics related to daily life are addressed. Only after mastering the B2 level does the student gain the ability to understand complex texts and scientific texts on a particular topic (CEF: 33-24). What is characteristic of these texts, among other things, is the complex language, the use of nominal style and complex words such as compounds (Gruber 2009: 78).

However, German language textbooks determine the various topics that need to be covered in the lesson for students to reach a certain language level. It is the teacher who decides, based on a number of factors, how these issues will be addressed in the lesson

Word formations are complex units, in the realization of which different grammatical, semantic and contextual elements participate (Bohn 1999: 55). Word structure plays a very important role in word formation. A compound word must be broken down into its parts or constituent elements and the fixed order of these elements as well as the role and function of each of them must be understood. Knowing the structure of the word and the rules of word

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formation helps us to define the boundaries between the constituent elements or parts of the newly formed word and to decipher its meaning. The earlier we get acquainted with this feature of the German lexicon and understand how it works, the easier it will be to work not only on the receptive vocabulary, but also on the productive one.

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